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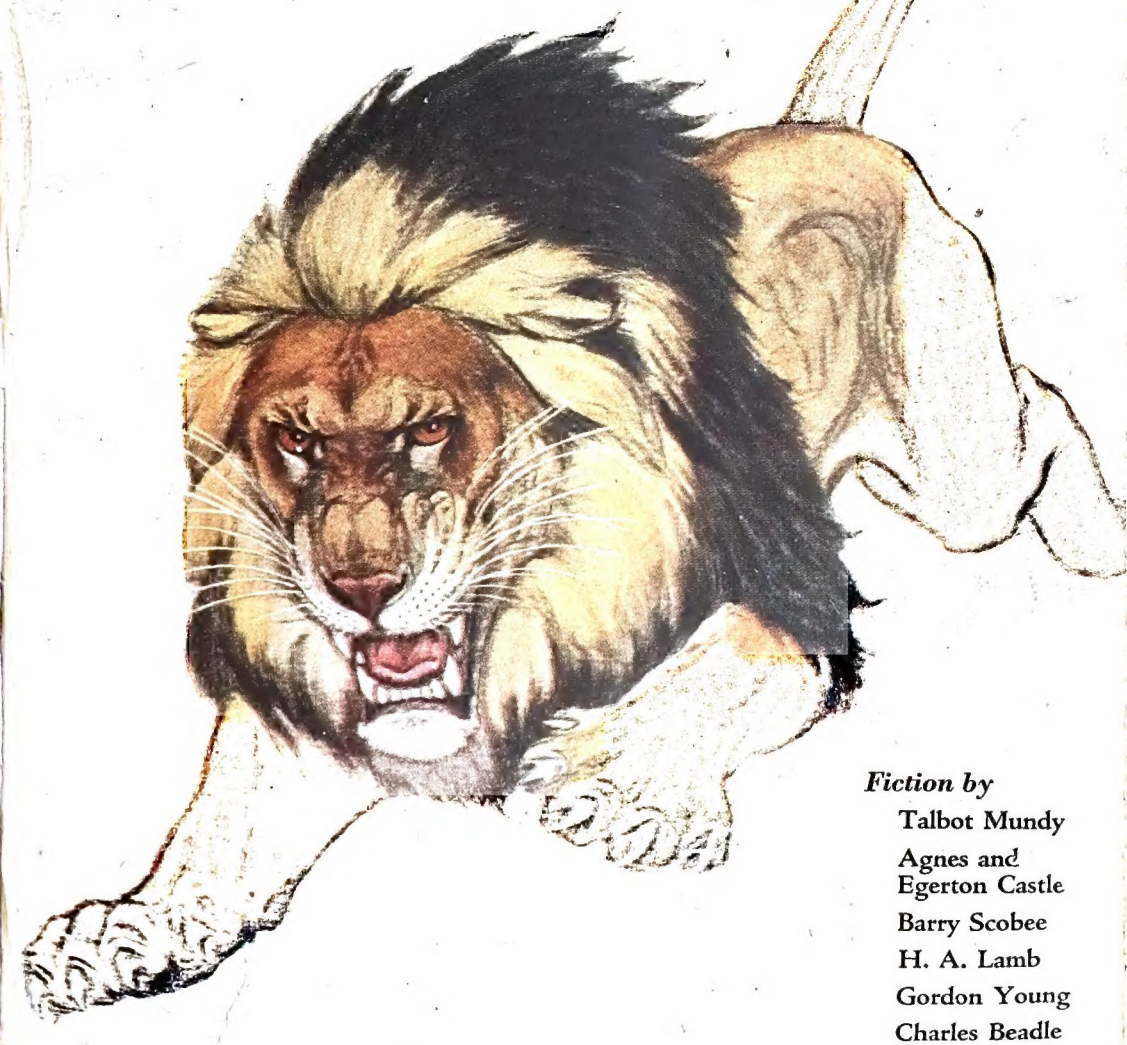

CHARLES LIVINGSTON BULL.

Fiction by

Talbot Mundy

Agnes and Egerton Castle

Barry Scobee

H. A. Lamb

Gordon Young

Charles Beadle

And five others w
tell good stories w

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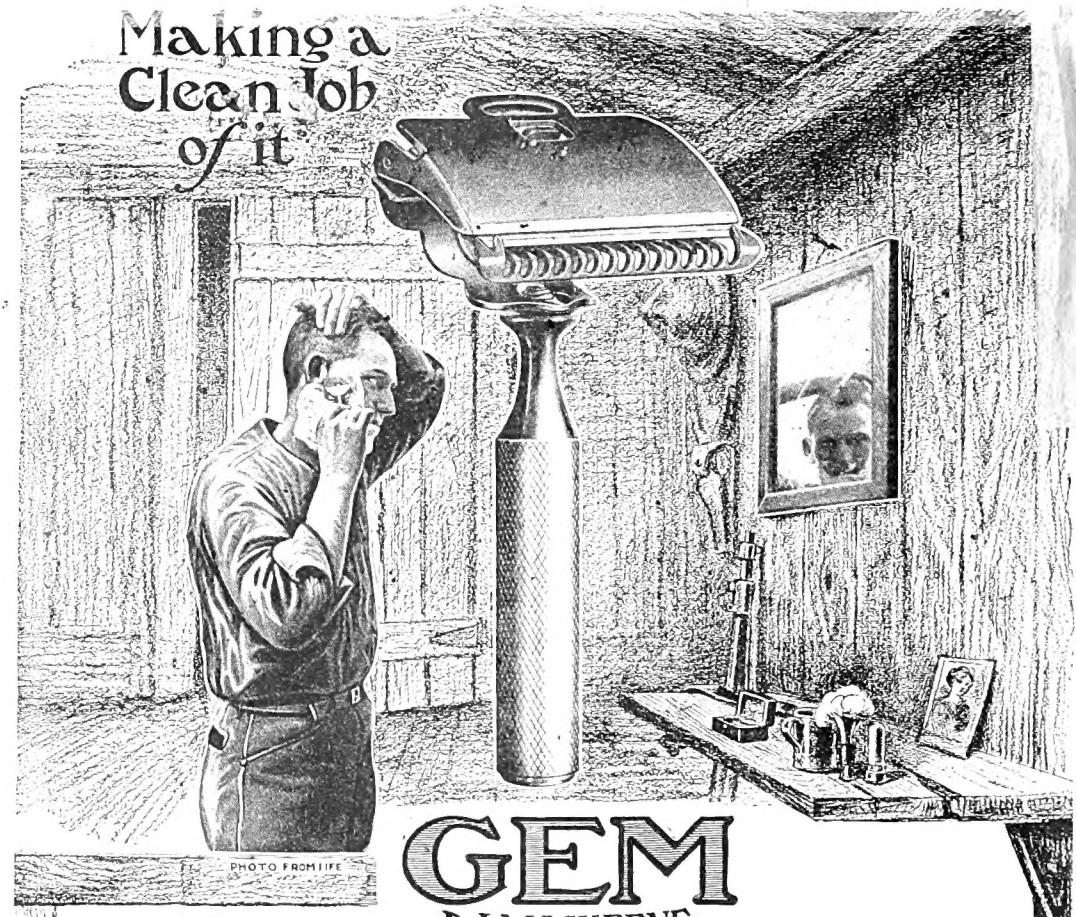

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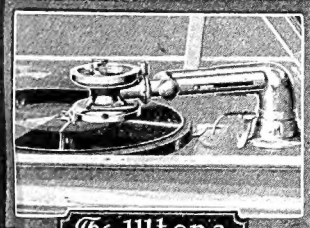
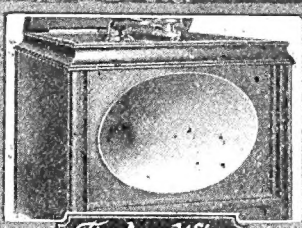


The Ultona

The Brunswick



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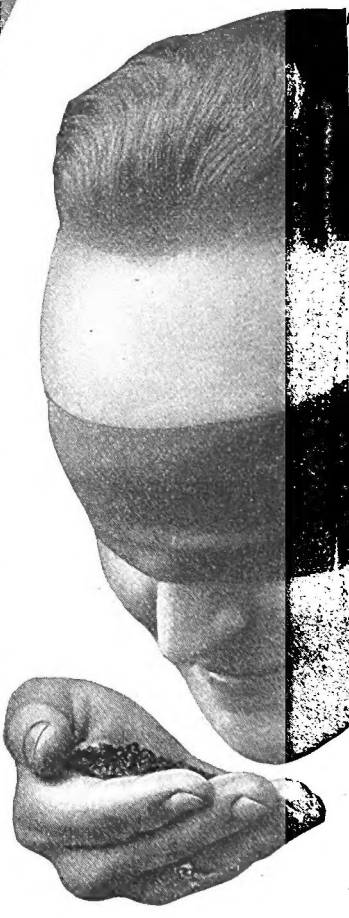

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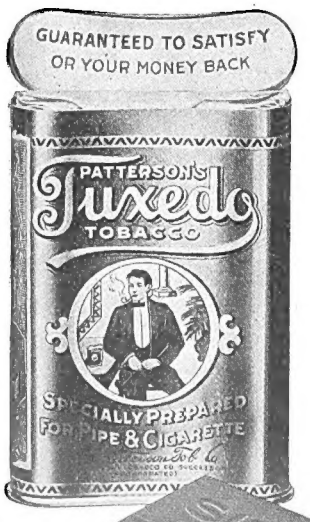

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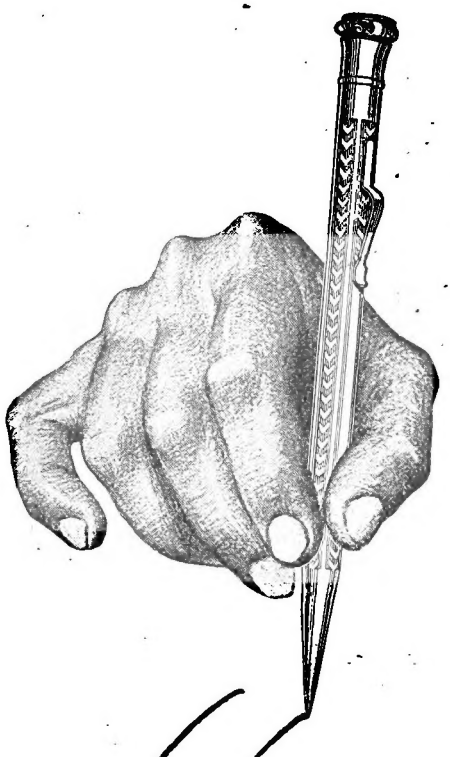

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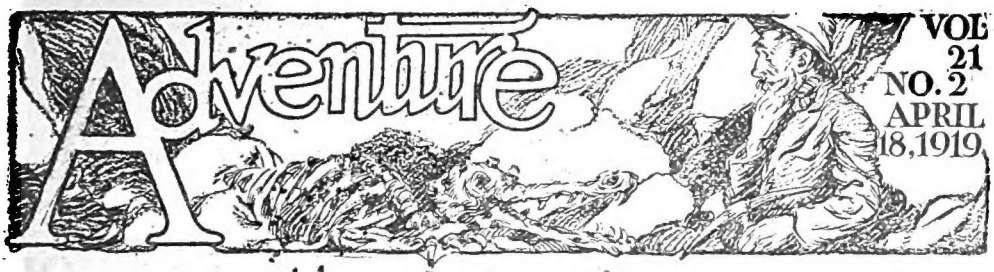

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THE NEXT ADVENTURE

Three complete novelettes and the first part of a new serial will come to you in the First May number, in your hands on April 3rd. You will find:

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ON THE TRAIL OF TIPPOO TIB

A Six-Part Story, Part I **By TALBOT MUNDY**

An Up-and-down-the-Earth Tale of ivory-hunting in Africa.

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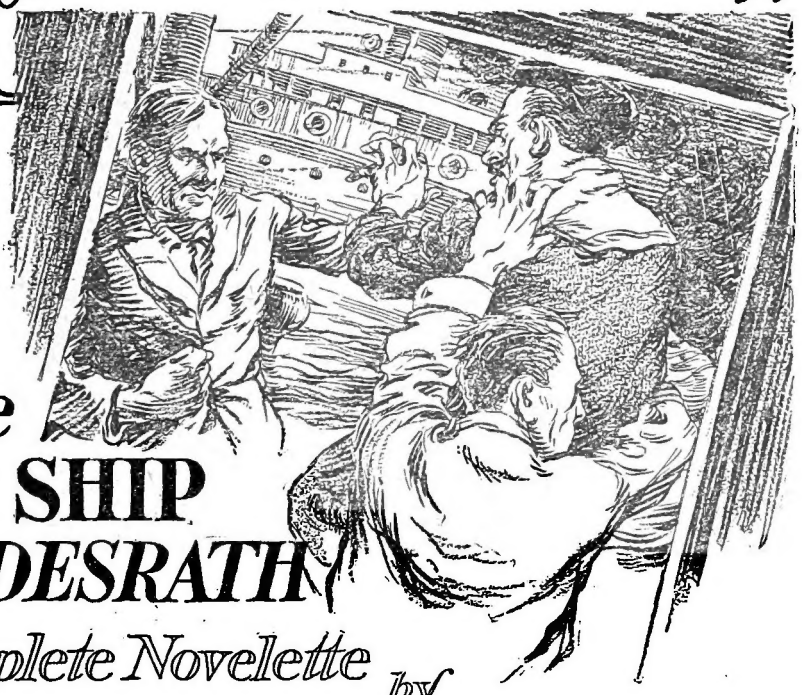

The END of the BAD SHIP BUNDESRATH

A Complete Novelette

AN UP-AND-DOWN-THE-EARTH TALE

by TALBOT MUNDY

Author of "Jackson Tactics," "Heinie Horns Into the Game," etc.

THIS is the fifth of a series of tales, each an entirely complete story in itself, in which an American and three English friends endeavor to gain by any honest means a large sum of money, which is particularly needed by one of them, "*Monty*" (*Lord Montdidier*). Hitherto they have had fair success, in spite of the venality of Portuguese colonial officials and certain *ante-bellum* schemes of Germany, which, incidentally, they balk. In this story, however, they find themselves unexpectedly at the mercy of some of Germany's mariners.

Each story is independent of all the others, the only link between them being the characters and the goal they persistently seek.

THE out-and-out, admitted tub that pleads guilty to pauper ownership and earns precarious pence along the meaner seaanes—rubbing paint-hungry flanks against comfortless quays, unsaluted, unrespected, unregretted when at last she pounds herself to flotsam on some uncharted reef, is a ship a merry minded man can love.

Even harbor-masters of the less-frequented ports, those sternest of dignitarians, can pity her and concede to her skipper less gusty anchorage of stormy nights. Her very ship's dog, portering fleas ashore for change of diet, finds friendliness in longshore hearts. But your tub that masquerades under a house-flag, carrying passengers at liner rates and pocketing for her owners a fat mail subsidy because they have a pull with powers that think they be, is despicable.

So, therefore, was the *Bundesrath*. As Fred Oakes said of her, she was "six thousand tons of deep-sea-going snob, with an insolent nose and a fat behime-end—simply asking for trouble."

She called her brass-bound mate first officer; the dead goat served in the first saloon was "prime Spring lamb"; the first-class passengers, berthed aft to catch the

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soft-coal smoke, were supposed to be of other clay than the second and third-class further forward; and all who were foreigners from the German view-point were, except Monty, as dirt beneath the captain's feet. Being Earl of Montdidier and Kirkudbrightshire, as well as cavalry colonel on half-pay, a privy councillor, and certain other things, Monty was addressed by all and sundry as "milor"—"*ja wohl*, milor"—"*sehr gut*, milor"—"olright, milor, oh, yes"—with other perfectly wide-world-comprehending phrases intended to display the speaker's erudition and make Monty feel at home.

Being of his party, we others were accorded seats with him at the captain's table. Monty sat on the captain's right, and we three faced the two of them; so the privilege was ours of seeing the captain wolf his victuals. Having seen and heard, we usually cut our own meal short and fled to the deck, Monty making our desertion an excuse for following.

But the awnings leaked, and the black deck caulking oozed out from the seams. From forward, where the live-stock lingered miserably up among the anchors, and East Indian laborers camped like gypsies amid dirt and sorrow in the waist, came a wholly unlovely smell, unchanging and inescapable. For all the vaunted German discipline, the second, and some of the third-class passengers invaded all decks, sprawling wherever a less shabby section of the awning suggested shelter; but their dirt turned into mud and there was no dry place anywhere.

For the rain had come at last to Gazaland. Famine ashore was in fair way to be ended, and comfort, ashore or afloat, had ceased for the time being to exist. Not that the *Bundesrath* ever had been comfortable, or ever would be. Merely, she was much worse when it rained.

"All the same," said Will Yerkes, sitting upright because a drool from the bridge-deck descended within six inches of him each time the ship rolled to port, "old man Noah was right. I reckon a ship's the place when a flood comes. Even this ship. The ark prob'ly wallowed round in rings. We seem able to keep a course. Ashore the mud'll be waist-deep, bugs keeping 'em company indoors and pestilence stalking abroad. Me for the sea!"

"Right you are!" agreed Fred Oakes. "Noah knew!"

Fred had found and preempted a corner in the lee of the smoking-room, where the awning scarcely leaked at all, and sat nursing his concertina on a camp-stool.

"But, speaking of Holy Writ—we're all in love with the notion of hell for our enemies—specially for this ship's owners—but—d'ye recollect where it says in Revelations there'll be no more sea? I couldn't enjoy a universe without a sea in it."

"The rest of Revelations is light after-breakfast reading, I suppose?" suggested Yerkes.

"You never served aboard ship," said I. "The sea looks fine to all except those who follow it, Fred."

"Fo'castle cynic!" he answered. "Unhappy outcast from sailing tramps! Forget your fo'castle days—they're over!"

"I wouldn't cross a street to be lord high admiral and have to go to sea willy-nilly," said I.

Monty, in a big basket-chair not very far away from us, was deep in a chess problem, with the folding board jammed tight between his knees.

"You're right," he said, glancing up at me. "Yachting's fun, though. It's whatever you've got to do that's ——. If I had to play chess I'd hate it. Fred hasn't got to play the concertina, but it seems we've got to listen! Shut up, Fred! Put that infernal instrument away!"

But the Muse was tickling Fred's larynx and charming his fingers. Some of the third-class passengers recognized the signs of tunes aborning. There were three mean whites in evidence, whose views on music were probably apocryphal, and more than a hundred Sikhs, Punjabees, Goanese, Singhalese, Seychelles boys, and half-breeds of a dozen flavors.

The half-breeds live in a border-world where music, like other things, projects itself, as it were, from both sides into ears attuned to emotion; but pure East Indians scorn Western melody. Nevertheless, they all began to gather about us, reckless of the rain. Misery is seldom in love with itself, and even a flea's high spirits, if not exactly contagious, would attract.

Fred struck a wild chord—corrected a flat into a sharp—changed it—struck another one—and burst into tune. In another moment Monty closed the chess-board, because serious thought is utterly impossible when Fred Oakes sings.

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"Oh, I took a trip to a mountain top,
Ah-dee, ah-dee, ah-day!
Where the view should make my heart-beats stop
And chase the blues away.
I climbed where the air was clear and cool
Through a hole in the azure sky,
But the view sat still, and the only fool
Who troubled to move was I!

"Ah-dee, ah-dee again!
Then me for the raging main!
I'd rather the sea in a cockleshell ship
Where combers rise and bulwarks dip
And bellying, thundering topsails rip
Amid the wind and rain!

"Oh, I took a trip to a mountain town,
Ah-dee, ah-dee, ah-day!
Where crags above green valleys frown
I chose a while to stay;
But the food and the folk and the beds were mean
Though the bill and the hill were high,
For they skin you quicker, and close and clean,
The nearer you get to the sky!

"Ah-dee, ah-dee again!
Then me for the raging main!
I'd sooner to sea and be fed salt horse
With fo'castle bread and cockroach sauce
On a punishing, blustering, blistering course
To the Horn and home again!

"Oh, I took a trip 'mid mountain peaks,
Ah-dee, ah-dee, ah-day!
Where the sun-warmed zephyrs kissed my cheeks
The lazy, live-long day!
But the girls o' the mountain passed me by
With haughty stare and cold,
And never a kiss from lips had I
Though I made free and bold!

"Chorus, you fellows!"

"Ah-dee, ah-dee again!
Then me for the raging main,
To labor aloft and reef and furl,
With weatherwise eye and heart awhirl
For a kiss o' the lips of a longshore girl
When I make home again!"

THE three mean whites applauded, and the heterogeneous Eastern brethren grinned. Oakes sang until his own long list of compositions was exhausted, and then fell back on stuff remembered from his schooldays or picked up in steamer smoking-rooms and camps the wide world over. But the weather grew worse, until at last the worrying wind and rain damped even Fred's enthusiasm; the mean whites went to the second-class bar to get drunk and the last wet, ragged, homesick Biluchi staggered to his smelly den up forward. —

Then, because there was no comfort within or without, but at least air to breathe on deck, we four went out and stood under the navigation bridge, wet to the skin, watching the shore-line and the wonders in between.

Every fresh squall that swept from landward carried with it changing hues of emerald-green and olive. Every low-hung cloud that raced between us and the land flung swifter shadows on a sea already stained by sand and weed and shoals. Minute by minute the weather grew more squally and threatening, great black clouds overhanging the little ones and blotting out the sun entirely except for intervals, when rays like those of a titanic searchlight threw the whole surging waste of water into many-hued relief.

The coco-palms along the low-lying shore bent double, swayed and bent again as if the storm would strip and uproot them. The sea would flatten as if it were semi-liquid stuff and a hand had smoothed it out. Then, as the water rose again in fury in the wake of the squall, the *Bundesrath* would shudder and reel and roll, lifting a third of her ugly length out of a wave and plunging like a leviathan in torment.

It was all fascinating—to any one who likes that sort of thing. I, who had followed the sea a while for a living and was disillusioned more or less, thought principally of the toil it meant for men on sailing-ships: both watches on deck and all hands half-crazy from lack of sleep. Each squall brought sterner memories.

But Fred Oakes—to whom life is an adventure and death, in any place but bed, at worst a joke—reveled in the wild beauty of the scene, leaning at times so far out over the rail that Monty would grab him nervously. Yerkes, too, was enjoying it.

Like many another Yankee's, his was a deep-sea heritage; grandfather, uncles, cousins, friends had owned or captained those clipper-ships that stole the trade of the world away by dint of swift heels and seamanship. He scarcely knowing why, the sea in her violent moods aroused in him all that was finest. He stood with a hand on the rail, silent and motionless except that his keen eyes quartered the sea without resting.

Monty, on the other hand, was like me, without particular enthusiasm. He stood after a while with his back to the rail and hands in his pockets. I suspected he felt

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seasick, but with that Spartan ability peculiar to men of his breed and raising would neither own to it, pamper himself, nor yield.

It was Will Yerkes, bright-eyed as a ferret, who had us all by the ears in a moment and, in another second, all staring at one point on our port bow.

"By God, look at that! Can you beat it?"

"What?"

"Who?"

"Where?"

He pointed. A barkentine between us and the shore—eight hundred or a thousand tons—foreign—from a garlic port by the look of her—perhaps out of Bilbao, or Lisbon—was suddenly caught aback by a squall that very nearly swept around the compass. Bad seamanship—inertia—dead weariness maybe—the lightning shift of treacherous wind—and probably ignorance as well combined to make her instantly unmanageable. Sails and two masts were twisted out of her with the speed of an explosion and lay alongside to pound her as she hove her side to meet the howling waves beam on.

She disappeared in a smother of white water to rise only after what seemed an interminable interval and plunge clumsily, a black, dismantled, helpless thing—yet not quite hopeless; for we were black too—easy to see—steaming more or less in her direction, with Lord-knew-how-many thousand horse-power and supernumerary crew to give us mastery.

They saw us; from the rigging of their one remaining mast they presently flew an ensign, jack downward. I could not recognize the flag, for it fluttered feebly and was twisted in the shrouds by wind and rain; but it seemed to me that then the *Bundesrath* humped herself under us and drove into the boiling sea a knot or so faster. That turned out to have been imagination, but on comparing notes later I found that the others had the same impression at the time.

It certainly at first never entered the head of one of us that we were not headed straight for the stricken ship. It seemed to me that our helm was changed several points. At any rate, our course was such that the crew of the brigantine, seeing us apparently bearing down on them, made little further effort on their own account although their ship seemed not only sinking but drifting, too, toward a boiling reef that would make short work of what remained of her chance of life.

"D'you calculate we'll lower a boat in that sea—or steam close and send 'em a line?" wondered Yerkes.

"Scarcely," said Monty. "Scarcely a line in this storm—even with a rocket. I think we shall lower a boat. We ought to see pretty seamanship—see what the Germans are good for."

The *Bundesrath* slam-banged along, headed, I thought, another point to port. I suppose we were making fourteen knots at the lowest reckoning—time being an element in most mail subsidies—but I noticed nothing in the way of preparation for the coming rescue work. I thought that cool and admired it.

"I suppose these squareheads have their drill down pretty fine," I said. "On an English ship they'd have had a boat ready before this, with a bucko mate easing his heart of bad language, and everybody nervous."

Yet I knew the reputation of the Germans on the sea. I suppose it was the Englishman's everlasting, foolish habit of imputing sportsmanship to men unable to be guilty of it and conceding the benefit of doubt to hogs undoubtable that blinded me to the already pretty obvious. Monty was soonest undeceived, but said nothing.

I climbed down the companion-ladder and stood in the rain in the waist, facing astern and looking upward to see how Germans shaped at boat drill. From where I clung to a ventilating cowl I could see the rows of life-boats on the bridge-deck—the officers, too—three of them—the junior, apparently in charge. The captain and first officer were watching the wreck through glasses, passing remarks to each other at intervals. I climbed to the saloon deck again.

"They've done nothing yet," I said. "They haven't as much as stripped the covering from a boat. There's no crew up there that could lower away or man a boat. You don't suppose——"

"I do!" said Monty grimly.

"What do you mean?" demanded Yerkes.

"*Deutschland über Alles!*" Monty answered. "However, we'll see——"

Fred Oakes made a grab for him, but missed.

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"Didums, you —— fool, come back here!" He had to shout to make himself heard at all, for the storm was increasing. "You ass, they'll clap you in irons! Come back and talk it over!"

But Monty was gone, two steps at a time, up the bridge companion, past the painted board that said *verboten!*

Yerkes leaned toward me and made both hands into a trumpet.

"There'll be a row!" he yelled. "Heinie's a surly brute when you bait him—our man's proud! Stand by to catch when they throw him down!"

He was half-serious, half in earnest, but I took him at his word. Once, on a deep-sea-going British bark, I was elected by the fo'castle to go aft—a delegation of one—to complain of flagrant and intolerable wrongs. Insight received on that occasion into how the "afterguard" review invasion of their sacred deck by uninvited folk had left its deep impression, and I did not suppose Germans would be more tolerant than Englishmen.

I had visions of Monty being hurled backward down the companion-ladder, kicked in the chest most likely—as happened to me. So I hurried after him and the others followed.

BEING well used to the deck of a plunging ship, I was only a step or two behind Monty when he reached the top. He did not set foot on the sacred bridge, but stood on the last step, clinging with a hand on either rail and waiting for somebody to turn and see him. I could see and hear, for my head was above the level of the bridge-deck, and the taut, breast-high canvas kept the wind away.

It was the first officer who turned and first saw Monty, and his jaw dropped with astonishment. He did not trouble to call the captain's attention; what is *"verboten"* under the *Vaterland* flag is something to be prevented or undone swiftly by any one in uniform. He made a savage sign with his right arm, as one would order a devil back down into hell, but Monty seemed not to understand. So he left the captain's side and came swiftly—charging, one might say.

"Weg! Go down!" he ordered. *"Dies ist verboten!* It is not allowed! Go below!"

"I'll speak with the captain!" answered Monty, slowly and loud enough for the captain to catch each word.

But that pompous individual was so sure of his subordinate's ability to uphold pride of place that he did not even turn his head.

"Gott im Himmel!" the first officer shouted. "I order you down! Do you not hear?"

"Order your God about all you care to!" answered Monty. "I'll speak with the captain!"

The German then caught sight of Yerkes and Oakes behind me on the ladder, and his hand went to his hip pocket with the blackguard instinct that thinks of violence first and argument occasionally afterward. Monty neither flinched nor even seemed to see the hint.

"What do they say?" yelled Fred from below, behind Bill Yerkes.

"Shut up," I answered, "or I can't hear!"

It may be that the first officer imagined we were counseling a forward move. At all events he decided the situation was too much for him unaided.

"Stay there!" he ordered. "Come no further!"

With two or three nervous backward glances, he hurried to the side of the captain, who seemed annoyed at having to take his eyes away from the spectacle of a helpless ship wallowing toward destruction. He made a gesture of impatience; then stepped briskly to the companion head, brushing the first officer aside.

"Dies is forbidden!" he announced. "Strictly forbidden! Go back!"

But Monty did not move.

"Don't be afraid of him, Didums!" called Oakes from below. "Tell him what you think of him!"

"We're with you, old man!" Yerkes shouted.

Honestly, for the minute I thought we might commit the unforgivable offense and storm the bridge in Monty's wake. I think the captain, too, entertained some foolish thought of that kind, for he followed the first officer's example and touched his right hip pocket.

"Vhat do you vant?" he demanded arrogantly.

He was a big, tub-bellied, pompous man, who took a deal of comfort in his stomach, unlike his lean, nervous second-in-command.

"I call your attention," said Monty, "to a ship in distress over there to port. She's signaling for help!"

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"Did you think I saw not?" the German demanded.

"I couldn't account in any other way," said Monty, "for your neglect!"

They were yelling at each other because of the noise of wind and sea and of the engines pounding down below us; it would not have needed much imagination to believe them on the verge of blows.

"What do you mean—neglect?" demanded the German.

"Neglect," said Monty, "of the first principle of decency!"

"Ged down!" the German roared. "Ged off dat ladder! Go to ——! You hear me—yes?"

"Not at all," said Monty. "All hell's yours if you want it! I'm calling attention to that ship in distress. Why don't you send assistance?"

"Who are you to order me? Do you not know this is a German ship?"

"Unfortunately, yes," said Monty. "No English skipper would need to be told his duty!"

"Duty! You tell me! *Donner und Blitzen noch einmal!* You —— English! It is my absolute duty to remofe you from this bridge!"

"Play your game your own way!" Monty answered. "You've been told in the presence of witnesses and of your own subordinate—" the first officer had come to stand beside his chief—"that your duty is to go to that ship's assistance! Unless you do, I shall report your conduct at the first opportunity!"

The German laughed—cynically—brutally—untouched except by a sense of being interfered with.

"Fritz!" he said, turning to the first officer, but shouting in English to make Monty understand. "You order that a live-boat be made retty. Let this English lord and his friends be pud in id. Let them go themselfs and helb that ship! That seddles it! Presto! Get down off this bridge! A boat shall be made retty—you four shall ged into it and go to ——!"

"You've had your attention called and you've been warned!" said Monty, turning his back.

And at that we all came down the ladder in single file, Oakes first.

There was not much to say, but we said it, I, the youngest, first and Monty last.

"Is there nothing we can do?"

"Who'd have believed it?"

"You ought to have knocked him down, Didums!"

"Watch, you fellows! The best we can do now is to be ready to swear to what we've seen!"

We were abreast of the wreck by that time, considerably less than half a mile away, and it was now obvious to the helpless crew that we were passing them without as much as an exchange of signals. Some climbed into the rigging of the one remaining mast and waved shirts—anything—frantically.

"Wave back to 'em!" urged Fred, but I objected.

"Why the devil not?" said Yerkes. "Let 'em know some one on this packet sympathizes!"

"It would raise false hopes," I answered.

"All the same," said Monty, "wave to them. If any get ashore they'll be able to swear they were seen from this ship!"

So we waved hats and handkerchiefs, and, not because we hoped they might hear us but because of rebellion, cheered, too—over and over again until we were hoarse. That called attention to us from the bridge. The first officer leaned over, saw and reported to his chief. The next minute an angry, guttural voice roared through a speaking-trumpet at us:

"Cease—do you hear me! Sdop from doing thad!"

But we only cheered the louder and waved more frantically.

SQUALLS—rain—swiftly drifting clouds—and waves that now and then ran cliff-high kept shutting off the wreck from view. It seemed to us that the third mast went by the board. Yerkes, who was keenest-eyed of the four, swore he saw her bottom-up; but after that I was very nearly sure I caught sight of her twice, still right-side-up, but so close to the reef as to seem a part of it. The *Bundesrath's* speed and the weather drew a curtain over the finish. But I went down in the rain to the waist again and, looking up, saw all three officers staring at the wreck, two through binoculars and one through a telescope. They knew all right what happened.

"Did you see the lookout on our fo'castle-head?" asked Oakes.

There was a bearded German seaman,

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his oil-skins glistening with rain and spray, leaning his weight against the rail that penned the suffering goats into the utmost corner of the bow—a viking by the look of him, blue-eyed, heavily built.

"He watched the whole thing," continued Fred, "as calmly — as calmly — as ——"

"As one pig watching another one killed!" said Yerkes. "I know! I went to college at Heidelburg. The whole nation's that way."

We paced the deck, staggering four abreast, for an hour or more, mostly in silence but swearing now and then. At dinner-time we sat down at the usual table, but the captain did not join us. It was six o'clock and time for the evening meal before we had opportunity to carry forward the account. Then, as we sat studying the menu, the captain came and plumped himself in his usual chair next to Monty.

"*'Nabend, meine Herren!*" he grinned.

He intended to be condescending and conciliatory, but there was more than a suggestion of mastery.

Monty turned in the revolving-chair and looked him over as a not very eager buyer regards an animal. The German's lips worked, and I thought there was going to be a row. The others thought the same, and we were all ready in a second to wade into any sort of scrap. But Monty rose leisurely, as no man does who means to start a fight.

"This ship is a sty," he said. "We can't avoid the dirt, but there's no need to sit with the pigs. Care to follow me, you fellows?"

"What do you mean?" demanded the captain.

But we all followed Monty down the saloon to another table at the end. The other first-class passengers were seasick, and we, the captain and two stewards had the whole saloon to ourselves. The captain called to the steward, and we sat waiting.

We waited in vain that evening. No steward would come near us. Our supper was a bad smell from the pantry, and the pickles and olives that Yerkes collected from half a dozen tables.

"Let's smash some crockery!" he suggested.

But that was vetoed.

"He only wants an excuse for putting us in irons," said Monty. "We'd satisfy no one but him that way."

"I dunno," said Yerkes. "I believe I'd be satisfied with one—just one crack at him before he arrested me!"

"He wouldn't arrest you, America. He'd call the crew," said Fred.

"I imagine between us we'd use up the crew—some!" Yerkes answered cheerfully.

"I'm going to sing to him!" announced Fred. "I sing best when I'm hungry. Hold the fort, you fellows, while I run to the cabin and fetch my concertina. I'll sing a song that'll make the fat rascal's belly bitter!"

But Monty talked down that proposal too.

"It's my experience," he said, "that looking for a way to get even with a cad is sheer wasted ingenuity. I'll report him. The papers shall roast him thoroughly, even if nothing worse happens to him. If he were English he'd be broke as a matter of course—might even lose his ticket. Being German, he'll probably be admonished not to get found out again.

"But what I'm driving at is this: a cad invariably fouls his own nest. All we need do is sit tight. He imagines the shoe is on the other foot, and that he should get even with us. Cads always react that way. He considers himself insulted and, in addition, he's more than half-afraid I can do something to jeopardize his prospects."

"But, —— him, at present he's starving us!" objected Fred.

"You're not dead yet, old dear," soothed Monty. "He'll relent by breakfast-time, for sake of the comity of nations. He'll probably try to put us off the ship at Beira. Failing that he's likely to charge us with some serious offense at our first port of call in German East."

"But, —— it!" objected Yerkes. "We've paid our fares to Mombasa! I don't exactly see my name in the Boston papers landed off this tub short of my destination as undesirable!"

Monty smiled amiably.

"As long as we save your reputation," he said, "we others will rest content!"

Fred and I laughed, but Bill Yerkes was not so easily scored off.

"When I joined this partnership the House of Lords achieved new dignity," he answered. "Have a try at living up to it!"

"What do you propose?" asked Monty.

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"You think that fat slob feels like putting one over on us. I say put one over on him! Forestall him!"

"How?" asked Fred and I together, but Yerkes betrayed all at once a tendency to dry up, as it were.

"Leave it to me!" he answered.

Monty yawned.

"Sketch out the main lines," I proposed. "Can't you give us a general idea?"

"We'll agree to anything in reason," said Fred cautiously.

"No!" said Yerkes. "I've trusted you fellows time and again. This is my trick!"

Monty yawned again and rose.

"Night, you fellows! I'm off to my cabin—can't stand the smell through that pantry door. Night, night, Yerkes. Let's see you win a trick from Heinie if you can!"

"For a seasick man he is some Indian!" said Yerkes, watching Monty's athletic back disappear through the saloon door. "Almost the only thing I've got against him is his title!"

"The title's been useful," said I, and Fred nodded.

"Then why don't he put it to more use?" wondered Yerkes. "Was he ever married?"

"No," answered Fred.

"He's the sort I wish our girls in the States would sign up with, instead of the aristocratic lemons they do pick! If he's in need of millions to clear the estate and live in style, why in the name of thunder don't he take a trip to N'York or Chicago. He could land a nice girl and a hundred million within a month!"

"Propose it to him, and see what he says!" suggested Fred, with the air of a man anticipating keen enjoyment.

"He's white!" said Yerkes. "He's handsome—healthy—sportsmanlike—I'd be doing the States a good turn—watch and see if I don't do it!"

Then the chief steward came and ordered us insolently out of the saloon. We had feed him when he first came aboard, on the "early and often" principle, and hitherto a more obsequious and flattering purveyor of unwholesome food would have been hard to find anywhere; but word had gone forth from the bridge, and now we were fallen from grace.

"*Schon sehr speht!*" he said fussily. "*Es wird*—you are required—at vonce you leave the saloon!"

We took our time. It was now Fred's turn to be pugnacious, Yerkes having relapsed into thoughtfulness. Fred's type of physiognomy, with carefully trimmed, pointed, reddish-gray beard—upturned mustaches like a troubador's—the head held jauntily on a strong neck, intolerant of any but the turn-down kind of collar—lends itself to quarrelsome expression, in that way frequently deceiving the elect, to say nothing of those who never see below a surface. Holding his face very close to the steward's, he felt the man's fat ribs for the softest place to punch. And my attitude—I was aching for a crack at somebody—prevented the arrival of reserves in the shape of underlings.

"D'you suppose there was a steward on that wreck we left behind?" demanded Fred through set teeth, prodding at a fat place with one finger.

"I know nothing of any wreck!" said the steward. "Such matters concern the high command!"

"You lie, you dog! I saw you watching from the stern! I hope," Fred selected thoughtfully, "that when a shark gets you at last he'll start in on you just there!"

"Ouch!" exclaimed the steward, all in a sweat with the heat and cold anticipation.

He thought we were going to beat him up, and I saw him, as I left the saloon last, turn savagely on his assistant with the illogical reaction all cowards evince.

THERE being so few passengers, we each had a cabin alone, in line; Monty's the end one. Seeing a light in Monty's as I passed, I went with Yerkes as far as the smoking-room and then made an excuse to leave him there a while. Monty's door opened the moment I touched it, but shut again under pressure from Fred's back.

"Let him in, Fred!" ordered Monty. "Now," he said, as the door closed again behind me. "Talk both at once, won't you, and get it over? You both want to say the same thing!"

"Be careful of Yerkes," I said. "He's not a bad fellow, but a Yankee. They have different standards over there. If you allow him a free hand he may get us all into serious trouble. He's our partner. We'd have to see him through."

"Fred has it the other way round," said Monty. "Fred says he's a Yankee, but not a bad fellow!"

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"What do you say?" said I.

"I say—suppose you fellows let me sleep—eh? If I never worry more than about what Bill Yerkes leads us into, I shall die in the end of comatose inertia! I suspect he hasn't a plan yet. He's trusting his mother wit to show him one."

Neither of us was satisfied. Fred went to bed, and I returned to the smoking-room to waste an hour or two in a futile effort to pump Yerkes.

"I've yet to meet the German who could put one over on me," was the final sum of the whole of what I got from him.

The following dawn rain had ceased for the time being, but it blew big guns, tearing away the awning all along one side with a noise like the Battle of Waterloo. We took our usual before-breakfast constitutional, reeling arm-in-arm up and down deck in pajamas, and were watched from the bridge with a new air of settled curiosity.

"They've made up their minds what to try to do with us," said Monty. "What interests them now is how we'll take it."

The hatches were closed tight when we came aboard in a hurry in Lourenço Marques, and all our luggage had been stowed in two empty cabins; as we passed along the corridor to breakfast we saw it being brought out and carried to the foot of the main companion. There was an awful pile of it, guns—tents, trunks, ammunition-boxes, saddles, camp-furniture, cases of preserved food—and it all slid back and forth in time to the ship's plunging so that the stewards had their work cut out.

As Monty had anticipated, they gave us breakfast at the table of our own choosing. But the chief steward was more offensively officious than on the night before. When we had finished he came and stood opposite Monty with heels clicked together.

"Orders are given," he said, "that the *Herrschaften* shall leave the ship at Beira. We shall arrive at Beira at about noon. The luggage will be put overboard into a lighter. The Portuguese authorities will be notified of compulsory debarkation of undesirable passengers. You should present yourselves at the purser's office on the main-deck to receive order for reimbursement of the balance of passage-money, payable at our office on shore."

"You have got that nicely by heart, haven't you!" said Fred, admiringly, but the chief steward clicked his heels, turned his back on us, and walked away.

"It 'ud suit my personal convenience," said Monty, "to leave this buzzard of a boat and wait at Beira for the B. I. or the French line. But convenience must go hang until we've taught these pirates a lesson."

"I've a plan for the lesson!" announced Yerkes with a bright eye. "Are you fellows really agreed to stick it out and see this thing through?"

"Waiting for you!" said Monty.

"I'll follow Monty's lead," said I.

"Tell us the plan!" said Fred, but Yerkes laughed.

"Go ashore if you'd rather!" he answered.

"If this were a German port," said Monty, "the rascals 'ud have us at their mercy. Now, why do you fellows suppose they should try conclusions with us here, instead of waiting until we reach Tanga, or Dar es Salaam? We'd have no show at all in one of their own ports. Here we've a British consul and authorities who must at least pretend to be indignant at the German fleet's recent effort to seize Lourenço Marques."

"*Quem deus vult perdere*," quoted Fred.

He never went to college, but quotes Latin for appearance's sake.

"No," said Monty. "They're not mad yet. That day is coming. This is a day of calculations—every move thought out carefully. There's more in this business than meets the eye."

"A —— of a whole lot more!" agreed Yerkes, and at that we all followed him up on deck, affecting not to notice our mountainous belongings.

There were stewards and a fourth officer hanging about to gloat over our annoyance; so we were aggressively cheerful.

The seasick passengers were on deck, but, besides being seasick, they were anti-English and gave us a wide berth. There was a Herr Professor Liebknecht and a Herr Doktor Kaspari, both with square shoulders and scrawny beards; and there were two beer-consuming representatives of export firms, one fat and the other lean, who showed the Herr Professor marked respect. The professor being evidently some one of importance, it occurred to Monty to go up and speak to him.

"Did you happen to see that ship in

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distress that we passed yesterday?" he asked.

"*Also—wann haben wir uns kennen gelernt?*" answered the professor, removing his spectacles to wipe them and blinking at Monty through short-sighted eyes.

He looked as disagreeable as a woodchuck caught away from home.

"He wants to know when you were introduced," Yerkes explained.

"My name's Mundidger," said Monty. "I'm Earl of Mundidger and Kirkoobrisher, and I don't care a —— who you are! Did you see that ship in distress we passed yesterday?"

"I do not care to speak English," snarled the Herr Professor, backing away along the rail.

He was a big Herr Professor, and looked capable for all his spectacles and inadequate whiskers.

"Would you care for a swim?" suggested Monty. "Answer, you reptile, or overboard you go!"

"It is none of your business what I saw!" said the professor in unexpectedly good English.

"You've one more chance!" said Monty. "Your last one!"

"If you mean that we should have stopped in that storm to rescue fools who should have known better than to be caught in distress in such weather——"

"Did you see the ship?" demanded Monty.

"I did see, but ——"

"That's what I wanted to know," said Monty. "I'm obliged to you. Thanks!"

The professor hurried off indignantly, what was left of his self-complacency blown away by the wind that hurled him round the corner of the smoking-room and out of sight.

"We've some pleasant companions to finish the voyage with!" Monty laughed. "That's to say, supposing we contrive not to be put ashore."

"That's arranged already," said Yerkes. "I was forward at break of day among the third-class passengers. One look round was enough!"

"Confound you, explain!" urged Fred, but at that moment a steward came, clinging and swinging along the bulwark.

"You should go to the purser at once!" he said, addressing all four of us.

"Tell the purser he may go to ——!" Fred answered genially.

"It is not an invitation," said the steward. "It is an order!"

"Very well," said Monty. "Change our permission into an order. Tell the purser from me that he is ordered to go to ——!"

"I dare not carry such a message!" said the steward.

"Jump overboard, then!" advised Fred.

"*Meine Herren*, I do not recommend—this is not advisable—it is—will you not please go to the purser?"

"Certainly not!" said Monty. "Tell him to come here if he has anything to say to me!"

THE steward departed in high dudgeon. Later we saw the purser climb to the bridge and hold consultation up there, with the captain probably, for we could already see the low-lying land near Beira—and Germans obey the sort of sea-rules that make for safety of their own ships. Presently the purser approached us with something in an envelope outheld.

"Your order for refund!" he announced curtly. "To be presented at our shore office for payment."

He thrust it forward, but Monty, leaning back against the rail, laughed in the wholly exasperating because undoubtedly careless way that the English-speaking nations—and, at that, only the best of them—alone seem able to achieve.

"If you do not take it, you will not obtain the money!" said the purser.

"You don't say so!"

"To which of you shall I then give it?"

He looked from one to the other and finally made up his mind to force it into my hands. I put them behind me. So he thrust it into the breast pocket of a raincoat I had pulled on in spite of the heat, and before I could snatch it out again the wind performed the office for me. The envelope went whirling and flurrying away astern, and was presently lost like a fleck of foam upon the waste of water.

"There!" said the purser. "There goes your money! You will be set ashore nevertheless! Now your only remedy will be to make application for refund at the company's head office in Hamburg!"

"The devil you say!" said Monty, and the purser walked away.

By that time we were in shallow, calmer water, maeuvering amid the shoals that

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guard Beira's inhospitable roadstead. A Portuguese pilot clambered aboard and was received contemptuously on the bridge. Monty drew an envelope from his own pocket, and looked about him curiously.

"Something heavy and not too large—the first thing handy!"

Yerkes was quickest. He drew a knife from his pocket and cut away the metal eye-ring, formerly part of the awning, that still hung from the stanchion. Monty enclosed it in the envelope, which I saw then was addressed to the British consul, Beira. Written above the address, very plainly, over Monty's signature were the words—

Please pay ten pounds or its equivalent to whoever delivers this.

I whispered to Yerkes what I had seen, but he appeared indifferent. Fred, on the other hand, was intensely interested and argued excitedly with Monty as to the best means of getting the message ashore.

"It must get ashore before we drop anchor!" he urged.

I was watching the water and observing the pilot's demeanor.

"The tide'll flow for an hour yet," I said. "I'll bet we don't run in until it begins to make."

"I hope you're right! If the skipper gets word ashore much ahead of mine, we're in trouble!" Monty answered.

But Yerkes grinned—foolishly, I thought.

"Counting your chickens?" I asked him, but he only whistled to himself.

There came alongside presently a neat little launch with a brass rail and the flag of the Portuguese Government. A man in a white hat and suit on board her shouted and waved his arms until a fat bundle of European magazines and newspapers was dropped from the bridge into the sea, missing him narrowly. His crew and the three passengers up forward under the awning laughed at his short-winded efforts to recover the bundle, and, while that was going on, a seaman in the stern, who held a rope fender between the launch and the ship's side, saw Monty's signals. Monty tossed him the envelope. He caught it—stared at the address, but plainly knew no English—looked up at us for explanations—and was seen from the bridge.

"Send zat letter up here!" the captain bellowed.

It is the exasperating fate of the world-ambitious German merchant fleet that it has to use the loathed English language for a *lingua franca!*

The shout called the man in the snow-white suit's attention and, abandoning all hope of the bundle, which had sunk, he demanded instant surrender to himself of Monty's letter. The seaman gave it up.

"Now we're done for!" said Monty self-accusingly. But Will Yerkes, close beside me with both elbows on the rail, began humming a tune I recognized.

Oh, rustibums and jolly good chums, who live like royal Turks,
Tee-tum, tee-tum, tee-tiddledy—and
To —— with the man that works!

"It's good to see our House of Lords exerting himself in vain," he said pleasantly.

"Send him down a line!" roared the skipper. "Send me zat letter up here!"

But the man in the white hat and suit could read English as well as hear it, and by that time he had deciphered Monty's order for the payment of ten pounds. He put the letter in his pocket.

"Send it up here!" the skipper roared again, and a hand-line whirled through the air to coil all about him. But he kicked and shook himself free of it.

Ten pounds, payable in gold or exchange at the English consulate, is an unanswerable argument. He gave a sign to the engineer, another to the barefooted Goanese helmsman and in a moment the launch was steaming helter-skelter toward the sand-choked river mouth.

"I'd have hated to be put ashore!" said Monty, but Will Yerkes laughed again.

"What do you think your consul could do for us?" he asked. "He can protest. But what will a protest amount to in the opinion of Heinie up on the bridge there? If the British consul is all you've got up your sleeve we've a fat chance!"

"America, you're simply betraying ignorance!" announced Fred, as usual Monty's instant defender. "You poor Republican ignoramus—you bally ass—don't you realize that the consul will set the cables burning at both ends? Berlin will hear from Whitehall within five hours! Man alive! It 'ud be an international insult to remove a British privy councillor from a ship against his will and in teeth of a consul's protests!"

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"Aw, I've heard U. S. senators talk that way," Yerkes answered. "Hot air! Besides—I don't hear Monty boasting. How about it, Monty? Are you willing to call on the British Government to declare war on our account?"

"No need to appear ridiculous," said Monty. "I've invited the British consul to come and dare this captain to put us ashore. You'll find he'll do it!"

"If that's your game," said Yerkes with another chuckle, "I've got it beaten to a frazzle—skinned both ways! Remember—you said, Monty, I was to take the trick from Heinie if I can. You all agreed we'd see this through! Am I right?"

Apparently we were deeper-laden than the coastwise liners usually are, for we had to hang about for four hours until the tide had made enough to lift us over the treacherous, shifting bars. The steward had to feed us again, and did it as ungraciously as Teuton manners permitted. There was still the same sickening smell through the pantry door. Then we went on deck again, to find ourselves in the flat calm of the river mouth and a Portuguese official tugboat coming alongside.

Yerkes left us at once. We three stood on the saloon deck about amidships and watched him go to the gangway forward, where the tug made fast. An officious Portuguese in linen and gold lace placed a sentry on our deck, and Yerkes spoke to the sentry. The sentry pointed, and Yerkes looked wise, with the very owl-like old-man wise look young Americans affect. Presently the gold-laced official, side-by-side with an obvious representative of the steamship company, came aboard and clambered to the bridge.

A perfectly obvious Portuguese doctor followed up the gangplank and was promptly buttonholed by Yerkes. And then a man who might be anything, neat, lean, and pockmarked, came aboard leisurely and looked about him. He climbed to the saloon deck as if the exercise bored him utterly and looked again—looked at Monty and Fred and me three times—then came toward us.

"I'm Brrritish consul," he announced, as if that, too, were a hardship. "I'm lukin' f'r th' Earrl o' Mundidger an' Krikoobrissher."

"I'm Mundidger," said Monty, offering a hand. "Glad to meet you, Mr. ——"

"McAllister. Alan McAllister. Proud to shake han's wi' ye, my lorrd. I knew y'r fayth'r. My fayth'r was bailiff on y'r lorrdship's estate o' Dundromochie—lived six-an'-fifty yearrr there, lad an' mon. That wad be before y'r lorrdship's time. It was through favor of y'r lorrdship's fayth'r I was put in a fair way tae get this poseetion here; an' a sorry, sinful hole it is tae live in, I assure ye! Ye owe me ten pounds, my lorrd."

"Certainly," said Monty and paid him with a ten-pound note.

"Mon—that was an awfu' price to pay for bringin' a wee letter ashore!"

"Cheap at any price," said Monty. "Had to get in touch with you. Fact is I undertook to report the captain of this ship for cowardly neglect of duty in refusing to steam to the assistance of a sailing-ship in distress. His answer to that is to threaten us with compulsory debarkation here as undesirables. That won't do, of course. In case you've forgotten the fact, I'm a privy councillor. Have to consider that, y'know."

"OF COURRSE, of courrse! These Germans are a strange rrace, but here an' there one o' them underrstands the amenities. Their consul here's frequently a friend o' mine when sober, as it happens he is today. I dinna doubt that wi' his aid, an' perhaps cigars an' a drrink or two, I c'd perrsuade yon captain tae wrrite ye a verra pretty letter, thankin' ye f'r frenship an' regrettin' 'at his ship isna' fit f'r ye tae trravel in—an' that's the truth! Mon—my lorrd—this is a bad ship ye're in! Have ye no' hearrd o' the recent attempt by the Gerrman navy to seize Lourenço Marques an' proclaim a German protectorate?"

"My friends and myself helped prevent that very attempt," said Monty.

"Then how in God's name d'ye come tae be aboard this *Bundesrath?*"

"*En route* for British East," said Monty. "She was the first ship making the trip upcoast, so we sent our traps aboard and followed."

"Mon—my lorrd—she was parrt o' the heinous plan! The consul in Durban wired me that from inforrmation received she's simply cram fu' o' guns an' ammunition! Ye know how these liners make the trip, don't ye—they come outward bound from

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Hamburg down one coast of Africa, an' gang hame again up t'other, first ship east, t'other ship west, alternately. This *Bundesrath* came down the west coast so chock fu' wi' guns an' such that she has scorrned to tak' aboard as much as another hundredweight *en route!*

"She has brought a full carrgo all the way down one side o' this grreat continent—an' now apparently she's takin' it home again! Is that natural on the face of it? Listen!" He lowered his voice to a sort of stage whisper, and raised a lean hand to his mouth to heighten the effect. "She has not had a hatch off once, all the voyage, though she's called at twenty porrts!"

"That might account for their stowing our heavy luggage in empty cabins," said Monty.

"Of courrse it does! Of courrse it does! Man, I'm tellin' ye she's loaded full wi' ammuneetion! When was the Gerrman squadron in Lourenço Marques? Eh? Didn't this ship come squatterin' in a matter o' two days later? So I'm inforrmed. Supposin' the coup had not miscarried, would it not have been a most Providential circumstance for the Gerrman admiral to receive all that extra ammuneetion, to say nothin' o' supplies, in the verra nick o' time? An' listen to this! Here's extra proof f'r ye!

"She's not had a hatch off since she left Hamburg. That's admitted. She's refused profitable business at every port. That's known. Three weeks ago another sinner o' the same house-flag cam' in here down the east coast, an' off-loaded two-hundred cases o' harrdware. Harrdware, mind ye—heavy as ——. They lay in bond here. Now—that coup in Lourenço Marques havin' miscarried, ye remember—this ship—that's refused business at every port—never had a hatch off—puts in here an' consents to take those cases o' harrdware; an' my friend Siegfried Hering, the Gerrman consul here, continues sober an' friendly f'r the space of two weeks, waitin' tae see the business done!

"Oh, but he'll be a drunken man tonight! The harrdware that came from Hamburg is to go back to Hamburg, cases unopened! Would ye call that cirrcumstantial evidence, or not, my lorrd?"

"Looks suspicious," Monty agreed.

"Then listen to this! Oor Government is strictly parrsimonious. I'm allowed no funds to speak of at all—none whatever worth mentionin'—f'r such purposes as procurin' intelligence—nothin' but a very small fund for succorin' distressed British subjects, an' f'r contingencies, etceteries, an' what not—all used up before a year's a month old. Yet I'm curious. An' I'm thrifty. I've money of my own. An' these Portuguese are avarrricious. Mon—I'm tellin' ye—" he raised his scrawny hand again and whispered hoarsely—"I've discovered beyond the risk o' a doubt that the harrdware is naethin' but machine-guns!"

"I don't expect they'll take it all back to Hamburg," said Monty. "Don't you suppose they'll land the lot in German East, Tonga, or Dar-es-Salaam, or Bergamoyo?"

"These cases are reconsigned to Hamburg," said the consul.

"They won't let a little detail of that sort hinder them. I suppose those are the cases coming?"

Monty nodded toward a float that was being warped alongside.

"Aye, yon's they. But if this captain's that anxious tae be rid o' ye, how is it he doesn't begin by orrderin' ye off the ship? There's the tug that sh'ud take ye ashore—the one that brought me. He's dilatory, f'r a man possessed by deterrmination! I'm thinking I'll go speak wi' him. May I understand that ye'll tak' my advice an' leave the ship peacefully—an' wi'out a regret, no doubt—provided I get fr'm him a statement in wrritin' tae the effect 'at he's had a pleasant trip wi' ye an' ye've behaved all the way like baa-lambs?"

"All right, McAllister," said Monty. "Anything to oblige. I guarantee to report him, and to follow it up! But my friends and I will wait here and finish our journey on a French or British ship, provided it's made clear in writing that we do it of our own free will. Otherwise, I'll resist—and let happen what may!"

"Man, man! There'll be no need o' disgracefu' scenes! No captain wi' all that cirrcumstantial evidence under all four hatches—an' the porrts o' all East Africa so thick wi' spies a man c'd scarcely step between 'em—him hurryin' home tae hide the traces o' his Government's failure tae break international law an' treaties an' good faith an' what not—no such captain wad let escape a chance o' avoidin' trouble!

"An' besides—should he deny me—

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there's Siegfried Hering ashore there, sober, an' fully aware 'at I ken weel what's in those cases! I'll have ye a letter fr'm the captain within twenty minutes. After that, be advised by me an' come ashore!"

The consul walked off in the direction of the bridge, we watching him with feelings of, I think, unmixed relief.

"What'll Will Yerkes say to it?" I asked presently. "We promised him, didn't we?"

"Will's a good fellow," said Monty. "He'll be as glad as the rest of us to leave this buzzard of a boat!"

But Monty was wrong. We all three undervalued Will Yerkes' ingenuity.

Yerkes himself appeared presently, climbing up the accommodation ladder from the deck below.

"What are you grinning about, America?" demanded Fred.

Yerkes certainly did look pleased with himself.

"I've fixed it so that we'll stay on board all right!" he announced. "I lied to the Portuguese doctor, but I told him the truth about that brigantine first. It was the first news he had of it. Seems she was anchored off here all last week—her skipper was Portuguese—friend of the doctor's. Naturally doc was mad enough to eat Germans by the time I'd finished. Then I told him I was a practising physician in the States, with a lot of Brazilian experience of epidemic and endemic diseases. He can't prove I wasn't! Doctors don't flash their diplomas in each other's faces on first acquaintance like two tecs trying to arrest each other.

"Then I told him we've got cholera and bubonic plague aboard! Took him among the third-class passengers and showed him three Indians with bellyaches and a half-breed with a toothache and high temperature. Assured him I knew the symptoms. Now get this and never again call me no diplomatist! If I'd offered my services he might have found me out. But your Uncle Dudley was too wise! I urged him to go ahead off his own bat. 'The discovery is yours,' I said. 'Full credit is due you. Say nothing about me!' "

"Good lord!" groaned Monty.

"You've done it, America!" said Fred with the jaunty air he usually keeps for unexpected trouble.

"What's the matter?" Yerkes demanded.

But there wasn't time just then to unfold the full enormity.

"We've no physician at all on board, have we?" asked Monty. "No one who could contradict the diagnosis?"

"No," said I. "The chief steward told me when we came aboard that the ship's doctor fell overboard off Lagos and was drowned."

"We might go ashore and be quarantined there," suggested Fred, our last-ditch optimist.

But that proposal was exploded even before Yerkes could swallow resentment sufficiently to demand an explanation for our right-about-face. The consul came, hop-skip-and-jumping from the bridge.

"Ye've no call tae worry about bein' set ashore as undesirables!" he announced. "It's quite the contrary! Ye've passages booked for Mombasa by way of Zanzibar, an' ye're refused permission tae land! Not a man may leave the ship! The lieutenant-governor himself—he wi' the gold lace an' white claes up yonder—says as much! I'll be lucky not to be quarantined myself. But his dibs was on the ship too—if they do me, then they shall him!

"Mon, ye've cholera aboard, or so they say—cholera an' bubonic! The captain's been told he may have no further communication wi' the shore on any grounds! Loch! Yon tug's whistlin' f'r all ashore! Goo'-by, my lorrd! Proud to ha' met ye! Glad tae be o' serrvice! Goo'-by, gentlemen! Ou-aye, I'll write the Foreign Office. Goo'-by, goo'-by—I'll be runnin'."

THERE was something like a stampede from the ship, headed by the lieutenant-governor. The doctor left last, explaining with great flow of gesticulation how the epidemic should be dealt with, the first officer walking sullenly beside him, receiving the explanation with contemptuous aloofness until, with a foot on the gangplank, the doctor turned to fire a last, unexpected shot.

"But never mind! But never mind! You have a passenger who is a doctor! Your American will tell you—they are skilful, those Americans! Ask him!"

The first officer looked as if a wasp had stung him, but made no answer.

In obedience to orders bellowed from the Government tug, the men in charge

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of the cases of hardware cast off and let the float drift clear. Bellowing from the bridge betrayed anxiety, shared by a German on the cargo-float, who did his frantic best to make the crew return alongside. But the dreaded word "disease" had gone forth, and no cajolery or threats could outweigh that.

"They're troubled about those cases! Watch the fun!" said Monty.

The Government tug hung around, as if intending to take the float in tow. A conversation in German, Portuguese and English followed, mostly through megaphones and wholly noisy, not ceasing until a man arrived in a fast steam-launch flying the flag of the Imperial German consulate.

Whether or not that was Mr. Siegfried Hering, he certainly had authority. The launch circled the float once, and orders passed in a tone entirely different from the babel that had been. The launch took station then between float and tug, as if to prevent interference, and the totally unexpected took place promptly. The float's crew manned the cases one by one, shoved them to the edge, and dumped them overboard with a splash into the opaque water, beginning along one side first. In ten minutes they had forty cases overboard—then five more—and the float took a list to starboard.

"Watch! Oh, watch!" said Monty, leaning both elbows on the rail.

The German on the float grew alarmed and shouted. The six-man crew clambered to the downward side to obey, and their weight, like a last straw, tipped the balance, The float up-ended leisurely, let cases, crew and angry German slide into the water and righted itself again. We four, leaning on the rail together, cheered and suddenly checked ourselves.

"Well I'll be ——!" said Monty.

"Well I'm jiggered!" echoed Yerkes. "Would you believe it?"

"Sweet!" said Fred Oakes. "Sweet and lovely!"

"How dare he, with people looking on?" said I.

The man in the steam-launch gathered the spluttering German from the water with a boat-hook, and promptly steamed away at top speed, leaving the crew of the float to swim or drown as nature and the laws of chance saw fit!

As a matter of fact, they did not drown, for Monty threw one line, and I another, that three of them managed to seize, and the other three clambered back on the float. All six were presently picked up by the Government tug, which took the empty float in tow and turned a hostile back on us. The last we saw of McAllister, he was waving his hat from the stern.

"We've this consolation," said Monty. "The captain knows the British consul came and talked with us. He's likely to take that into consideration."

"But you've done it, America. You've done it!" said Fred with a wry grimace.

"Well, I like that!" exploded Yerkes. "Was the agreement that we'd stay on board or wasn't it?" He turned to Monty. "Did you or didn't you tell me to score off Heinie if I could?"

"Certainly!" laughed Monty. "You scored. The trouble is, though, that we're certainly headed next at top speed for a German port—where we haven't a consul to bless ourselves with! No plague or cholera developing, they scent your practical joke. Having no sense of humor, they retaliate!"

The *Bundesrath* got up her two clumsy anchors very bad-temperedly, wheeled in a muddy circle and made for sea, scarcely slowing down sufficiently to drop the pilot into a lugger that watched for him. Monty proved right about the impression made by our consul's visit; our luggage was returned to the empty cabins, and the under-steward assigned to wait on us—at a table all to ourselves—was the quintessence of servility.

But the four other first-class passengers declared war. Led by Herr Professor Liebknecht, they constituted themselves a board of censorship at the next table, resenting with clucking and sucking of teeth, our outbursts of high spirits. And unless you were a misanthrope it wasn't possible to sit at table with Fred Oakes without laughing nearly all the time.

When supper was nearly finished, the professor went from mere expostulation and being noisily scandalized to the laying down of law to his companions, all of whom—even the Herr Doktor—treated him with utmost deference. Since I sat facing them, I had a good view of the growing rage and indignation.

"There's trouble coming!" I announced.

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"Oh, bosh!" said Fred.

But he had his back toward them.

The professor presently began instructing one of the two square-shouldered commercial men—the stouter one, who had a duelling scar on his lower lip—impressing over and over on his mind some formula. Mine was the sort of knowledge of German one learns in an English school and, although I caught occasional sentences, I did not understand.

At last the commercial man seemed primed. He rose and made his way toward us, undignified because of the ship's motion but commanding a deal of arrogance instead.

"*Sie!*" he said, standing as near Monty as he could come without loosing his hold on the table behind.

"Meaning me?" asked Monty blandly.

The man had what he had to say by heart and said it slowly, without much German accent, accumulating insolence through very absence of all haste.

"You are required in future to take your meals after other passengers have finished! Foreigners permitted to travel on German ships should see to it that their manners are unobjectionable, failing which they can not be permitted to inflict themselves on cultured society! You are notified not to come to table in future until after Herr Professor Liebknecht shall have left the saloon!"

Fred half-rose to his feet, but collapsed again at sight of Monty's face. I was speechless; my one instinct was to punch the man's head, but I, too, divined that Monty had the situation and his own temper well in hand. Will Yerkes laughed outright.

"Would you believe it?" he asked, looking so unqualifiedly amused that my own rage dwindled.

"You object to my manners, do you?" asked Monty.

"Yes!" said the German. "You are notified!"

Monty rose from his chair without haste, and a sort of breathlessness seized every one. I saw the professor wipe his spectacles, and the stewards, coming with dessert, set down what they were carrying. The German would have walked away if his position between Monty and a revolving-chair would have permitted that. As it was, he stood very bolt-upright, looking fierce.

We three knew Monty for the foremost English polo-player of his day—and that was not so long gone—and it is no secret to most people that the muscles of the British upper class are as a rule as well-conditioned as their skins are clean. But, except perhaps for Fred Oakes, who knew him best, I think every one was taken by surprize by what followed.

"You pick your teeth at table!" Monty said quietly. "Neither you nor your professor wash! You eat like swine! It's a pity to have to touch you, but here goes!"

Divining violence, the German had raised both hands in a sudden, ill-considered posture of self-defense. Monty closed with him so swiftly that one's eye scarcely caught the movement, and the German's gasp was echoed by an explosion of guttural threats and "*Achs!*" from the other table. The other commercial individual aimed a glass at Monty's head, but hit his own man, and the stewards started up-saloon at the double to interfere. But Monty's speed was prodigious.

THE German gasped as the iron arms crushed him. He beat with his fists at Monty's face and tried to bite when he found he was only beating air. Then he kicked. But Monty shook him, and the fat legs in a second were above table level, scattering dishes and glasses in all directions. To and fro, faster and faster, higher and higher he shook him, less and less able to think; then suddenly he loosed him like a bag of inert stuff from a catapult. He brought up plump among the dishes on the Herr Professor's table.

Then Monty sat down, not even breathing heavily.

"Steward!" he called. "Bring me some more potatoes!"

"Didums, you —— fool!" said Fred Oakes. "You've done it! Now it's war!"

"War be it!" answered Monty.

"Deal me in!" said Yerkes. "If all the men with titles were like you, Monty, I'd turn monarchist—durned if I wouldn't! I've not seen manhood asserted better even in the States!"

But it was not all over yet at the professor's table. For one thing, the ship was rolling violently. He who was flung broke, as he fell, the wooden fiddle, set to keep dishes and plates from dancing

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quadrilles; then the ship pitched and he slid with the whole mess into the professor's lap. By the time he had been dragged free he was nearly insane with frenzy and as ready to fight his own crowd as any one. The professor, however, was no longer in love with direct offensive—too bruised—too taken by surprize; he sat clawing colored blancmange from his whiskers, with an air of contemplating worse than murder by subtler means.

The chief steward, fussing like a wet hen, demanded explanations from every one, his blue-jacketed back toward us. Suddenly the man whom Monty had rough-handled recovered breath and wit enough to reassert himself and began blaming the chief steward for the whole business, calling him a "*Schafskopf*" and "*dummer Esel*" for permitting such incidents to take place at all in his saloon.

During that altercation the other commercial man—the lean one—hurled a broken dish at Monty, missed him and hit me. I sprang from my chair to retaliate, when the door at the end of the saloon suddenly swung open and in strode the captain, followed by his fourth officer and two quartermasters.

"What means zis?" he demanded.

Seeing us quiet and the men of his own nation flustered and enraged, he strode down the saloon and began interrogating the professor. All the Germans, including two stewards, talked at once until he angrily demanded silence. Then we heard the professor's voice, like a meat machine mincing words, unmistakably and spitefully denouncing us four.

"He's telling him we began it!" said Yerkes, getting up to interfere.

"Better sit down, Will," Monty advised. "At the first excuse I suspect he'll go the limit!"

"Why don't you horn in, then?" Yerkes demanded. "You don't know what he's saying!"

"As a soldier," said Monty, "I was paid as much as two-pence a day extra for knowing German!"

"But I thought you——"

Monty smiled.

"I don't always tell all I know, Will. Our position's desperate unless we're awfully tactful. I do wish you'd sit down!"

At last the captain turned on us, well backed up by his fourth officer and quartermasters.

"Vill you have meals serfed in your cabins for ze future, or vill you prefer ze second-class? Ze ozzer passengers refuse any longer to eat togezzer vid you! Vun or ze ozzer—choose!"

Monty answered civilly enough.

"You've heard one side only. You've not even asked for our version of what has happened."

"No need!" said the captain. "Vhat has happened has happened! It shall not again! You choose!"

"Certainly not!" answered Monty. "My friends and I have been insulted by the people at that table. You are responsible for your passengers. Do what you see fit—on your own responsibility!"

"Leafe the saloon, then!" the captain ordered. "You four take meals in ze second-class!"

"On your responsibility!" said Monty imperturbably.

"Go at once!"

"Certainly not!" Monty answered. "We'll go when we've finished dinner!"

The quartermasters had revolvers. The captain glanced at them irresolutely, changed his mind and ordered them in German to stand guard over us until we should leave the saloon and not to readmit us. Then, with a bow and a joke to the Herr Professor, he swaggered out, leaving the fourth officer seated at a table near the door to guard against contingencies. The fourth was a very young man, and made a ridiculous exhibition of his pride in owning a repeating pistol.

There came very near to being another fight after that, for the Herr Doktor seemed to think he had been jockeyed out of his fair share of the limelight, and started a tirade against us that lacked nothing of imagination or virulence; it included—according to Yerkes—a dissertation on British rule in India and an assertion that the British themselves are ruled and owned by a German king, financed by German money, fed with German food, clothed with German suits, and Germany's indubitable destined prey. It was Yerkes who stopped him.

"See here, you!" he called to the fourth officer. "If that goes on I'm going to break his jaw! You'd better stop him!"

The fourth did not understand; so Yerkes translated into German and they all got the benefit of the idea. After that there

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was more or less silence, the chief steward hurrying through the business of laying fresh plates and bringing on the last course. We left the saloon last, at our leisure, dawdling over coffee until the fourth officer, steward and quartermasters looked satisfactorily nervous and exasperated.

"A mere miserable public-house brawl!" said Monty disgustedly, when we got outside the door. "They had the best of it, and we've no remedy!"

"Go and play chess, you old idiot!" said Fred. "Play chess and you'll feel cheerful as an old maid over a cup o' tea by breakfast-time!"

But Yerkes and I were not so sure as Fred of the efficacy of Monty's chess-board and went to our cabins in considerable gloom. They had let us keep the same cabins—I suppose because the German passengers were on the other side of the ship, with a bulkhead between our row of doors and theirs—but I noticed that one of the quartermasters came and stood guard by the saloon door at the end of the corridor.

That was one of the worst nights of a memory that includes more than its fair share of difficult occasions. The over-engined tub, groaning—creaking—throbbing, pitched and rolled to such a tune that one could hardly keep abed by clinging to the hand-rail. Added to that there grew a great and ghastly smell, unchastened by the fact that they had closed all ventilators. The heat between decks grew to be a part of the noise and stink; the whole, with the motion, constituting pure and simple hell. Even the cockroaches seemed distressed, hurrying back and forth across the floor and sheets with something akin to frenzy.

THERE happened, too, during that night a great rushing back and forward in the corridors. I heard a voice that kept calling, "Herr Doktor! Herr Doktor!" and at last he answered, sleepily—angrily.

"What are they saying?" I called through the grill that separated my cabin from Will Yerkes'.

The Yankees are a remarkable folk. It seemed that he, too, slept.

"Aw—go to ——!" he answered when I finally awoke him.

"Wake up and listen!" said I. "Something's happening. As for ——, we're there!"

He and I put our heads through the cabin doors and heard the Herr Doktor repudiate indignantly a proposal somebody put to him, Yerkes translating to me.

"But I am a Doktor of Psychology, not medicine!" he answered. "I tell you I know nothing at all of medicine! No, no, no!"

Somebody whispered an answer in a hoarse voice—terrified words we could not catch, like the haunting summons of a nightmare.

"I tell you I can do nothing!" repeated the Herr Doktor. "It must be the captain's business! Go to him! Tell him! Consult him!"

The voice insisted he came directly from the captain in obedience to captain's orders. It was reenforced by another voice confirming that, with the added information that orders were to hurry.

"What do I care? I am passenger, not member of the crew! Tell the captain to manage his own affairs! Go away and leave me!"

There must have been five or six men on that errand to bring the Herr Doktor, for we heard the feet of enough men go hurrying back along the corridor to have carried the Herr Doktor with them, dead or alive. In the comparative silence that followed, I heard Monty being seasick and started to go to him, but the quartermaster on guard by the saloon door aimed his pistol and ordered me back in. So it was morning before we as much as guessed the extent of the trouble, and we had stifling misery enough of our own, meanwhile, to drive most other thoughts out of mind.

They gave us breakfast at the one long, black-oilcloth-covered table in the second-class saloon, together with the three mean whites—all English—who were recovering from being drunk and seasick, but ate omnivorously. They were curious as to the reason of our being there, but Fred turned questions aside, and Monty—I suspect without meaning to—rather overawed them; so the miserable meal was eaten in more or less silence, until the brass-bound first officer came in.

He had white eyelashes, and his great height made bottle shoulders seem all the more inadequate to carry the dignity he claimed. I liked the look of him no more then than on the previous day when we had invaded his privacy on the bridge. And he quite plainly did not like us.

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"Which of you is the doctor?" he demanded, holding his chin as the Uhlans do, with those high collars that never permit them a glimpse of less than mightiness.

"No doctor in here, you fool!" snapped Fred. "If there were I'd have him analyze this sausage! Here—look at it—have a smell!"

He held a slice of the atrocious stuff on a fork for close inspection.

"You should behave yourselves!" the first officer answered haughtily. "There is a doctor among you," he repeated. "I know it!"

"The devil you say!" said Fred.

"Which of you is the American?"

"As if you didn't know, you stilted jackass!" Fred retorted. "This man here—" he touched Monty—"is a Scandinavian-Greek-Jew. I'm Hottentot. My friend on my right—" he touched me—"is South-American Eskimo, and the rest of our party is Indo-Chinese. Now what can we do for you, ducky?"

"Good lord!" Yerkes whispered under his breath. "What'll I do? Shall I kid I'm a doctor——"

"Why not be a Yankee!" suggested Monty kindly, leaning forward to whisper as the first officer stepped back to cling to a column for support, for the ship was rolling more than usually badly.

"You mean?"

"*Ayez confiance!*" as our friends the French say. "If they need a doctor badly we have them where we want them, haven't we?"

"But I'm no doctor!" answered Yerkes.

Monty shrugged his shoulders.

"I've been a blacksmith and a camel's dentist before now!"

"You want me to claim I'm a doctor?"

"I'd let them do the claiming," said Monty. "As for the chance ——"

"Oh, all right!" said Yerkes.

Fred began to hum "Yankee Doodle," perhaps under the impression that the tune would improve Yerkes' courage.

"The doctor at Beira—the Portuguese," said the first officer, stepping forward again with some show of impatience, "told me the American passenger is a doctor. It is no use your pretending! You are the American. You are therefore the doctor. Come with me!"

Then Will Yerkes made what the rest of us thought was a mistake. It was certainly not cowardice, for he has too many times stood the uttermost test of five-in-the-morning courage to be challenged on that score. But his peculiar New England conscience now and then tripped and balked him, like a sword on parade between a man's legs.

"I haven't a certificate," he said.

"Who cares!" snapped the German. "If you have forfeited your certificate, you have not forgotten what you know! Come along!"

I met Monty's eyes again; then Fred's. Our momentary gain was lost already. Provision of a doctor in their hour of need was now offset by the hypothetical doctor's lack of caste. Yet for Yerkes to refuse duty now would be to invite such reprisals as desperate men who think they hold the whip-hand usually resort to. I, for one, had no faith in the quality of forbearance likely to be extended us on that ship.

Fred seized the mustard, pepper and salt, mixed them all together in the mustard pot and pushed the mess along to Yerkes with a hunk of rye bread.

"There you are, Will!" he grinned. "Make pills out of that. Dose 'em all, beginning with the skipper!"

By this time the three mean whites, already sufficiently solemn after their debauch, grasped the fact that serious trouble was afoot.

"It was true, then," said one of them—he nearest to me.

"Didn't I tell you? Didn't I say I went and looked? You said I was drunk. So I was. But what I seen I seen! Cholera, says I to you! When sailors start chuckin' third-class passengers overboard afore they're properly dead, there's cholera aboard, says I! But you fools wouldn't listen!"

Will Yerkes was listening—with both his ears, and an expression that made all of us except the German laugh.

"It is no use tendering objections!" snapped the first officer. Then he turned from Yerkes to us. "You laugh, but *nun geht es los!*"

His patience being obviously at an end, there was nothing for it but to obey, or else refuse and take the consequences. We were all rather curious to know what the price of refusal would be—how far a German skipper would permit arrogance to take him, yet not willing to court further trouble if Yerkes

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could be induced to play his part. And, as soon as he realized how Monty felt about it, Yerkes was willing enough. He got up.

"Who's coming with me?" he asked.

"You go," said Monty, nodding to me. "Fred and I will follow if we're wanted."

"No, no! You come alone!" said the German, with a hand on Yerkes' arm.

Will shook off his hand as if it burned him.

"Touch me again and I'll thrash you!" he growled.

"Come to my arms, America!" Fred laughed. "For that you go straight to heaven when you die! Peter will admit you *muy pronto—vous donnera les grande entrée*—only, hit him next time before he paws you!"

"Lead along!" growled Yerkes.

The first officer started for the door, and I followed them. We all three had to cling to door-posts and hand-rails, and at that Yerkes slipped and fell in the slime where sea-water had invaded the passage. Perhaps the second-class and third-class quarters on that ship were cleaned in Hamburg, once every other month, but surely not oftener.

The forward part of the main-deck, open to the sky and sacred to winches, latrines a jury-galley and third-class passengers, was a slippery, wet wilderness. At every roll waves poured in to boil around number one hatch and escape through a swinging port to leeward. We had to dodge and run for it, clinging to a life-line.

THE first officer was first to reach the dim hole that permitted the ancestor of all stinks to creep out and poison the free air. He stopped and stood aside to let Yerkes pass him; then stepped over the coaming and barred the way.

"You wait here!" he ordered me, with a smirk at the rain and invading waves.

I was already drenched to the knees, hatless, and without any covering against the rain, a fact that he thoroughly appreciated. He turned his back on me and went on in, but the minute I tried to follow a sailor in uniform pushed past him and thrust me backward so suddenly that I hit the coaming with my heels and fell out backward. I was up in a second, in no mood to weigh consequences, and landed with my left fist on the sailor's nose.

"Will!" I shouted. "Hey, there, Will!"

The sailor roared with rage and made a rush at me, but the German is rare who can use his fist to much advantage; and, in full view from the bridge, I held that smelly entrance against him, my back to the air and light, he no more able to come out than I to enter. Every time the *Bundesrath* pitched or rolled we fell on each other and fought hammer-and-tongs style, he getting the worst of each exchange.

"*Herrrrauss!*" he roared, making his dozenth rush, and at last Will heard my shouts. He came back three steps at a time up the steep companion-ladder, seized the sailor in the rear, whirled him about and thrust him downward into darkness toward where a couple of electric lights burned like sore, immoral things. They were naked, those lights—naked and ashamed, shedding no rays, except for a space of a few feet. The stench was awful.

There was another row, of course, at the foot of the ladder—fifteen feet below the fo'castle, in the *Bundesrath's* fore-peak.

"Get back!" ordered the first officer.

"Not a bit of it!" said I.

"He stays or I go too," said Yerkes.

"He struck me! They both struck me! This one took me by the neck! He threw me down-stairs!" yelled the sailor in German.

"You shall suffer for this!" said the first officer in English, but whether he meant Yerkes or me or both of us, I never knew.

"Both or neither—which is it?" Will demanded.

"Go on, then—*vorwaerts!*" the German answered between his teeth.

The sailor, still protesting, discovered an electric "trouble-light," with two or three dozen yards of wire attached, stowed under the ladder. He fixed it to a plug and switched it on, revealing such a scene as Chinese treaty-ports, perhaps, and perhaps Calcutta at its wretchedest might rival.

On the floor on mats—on bunks that resembled pantry shelves as much as anything—on a table meant presumably for social amenities—under the table—and slung in hammocks from the smoked and greasy beams, lay human beings of all the nationalties that eke out mean existence east of Suez. They were nearly all seasick, but some were evidently stricken by a deadlier foe than that.

There were men, women, children—

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Chinese, Malays, Hindoos, Singhalese, Somalis, Arabs, Punjabees, Baluchis, Afghans —a score of tongues, religions, habits, smells—one misery—one hopelessness.

I noticed three empty bunks that no one from the foul floor cared to occupy.

Trouble-light held out at arm's length in front of him, the sailor went before us, the smoke and foul air shifting sluggishly in milky streaks. He stopped away up forward, where the sides of the place narrowed rapidly to form the *Bundesrath's* ungainly bow, and thrust the naked light six inches from the face of a man—or the shape of a man—on the lowest, uncleanest shelf of all. It was unclean as cages are.

"Phew!" exclaimed Yerkes.

I pulled out my handkerchief. But the first officer laughed.

"Is he dead or alive?" he asked. "Has he cholera, or is it something else?"

"Has any one offered him a drink since yesterday?" Yerkes demanded, and there seemed no answer to that.

"Is it cholera?" repeated the first officer.

"Am I in charge of this place?" Yerkes demanded fiercely.

"You—a doctor—ask that?" said the German.

"Am I?" demanded Yerkes again.

The first officer made a gesture with hand and shoulder. It was not intended to be commital, nor yet polite. The sailor turned the light on us three, and I never saw such contrast of expressions: Will Yerkes, angry, compassionate, outraged—the first officer arrogant, stupid, but not sure of himself—the sailor simply bovine.

"If that is cholera," said the first officer, "three died in the night—contagious—throw any overboard that seem too bad!"

"What about medicine?" Yerkes demanded. "What have you got?"

"Only a little. Our doctor fell overboard. His quarters are locked up."

"Give me the key! I'll go and look."

"I have no key."

"Then get it! Phew! I'm going on deck! Here, you!" He turned to the man who held the trouble-light. "Get fresh water in a bucket! Offer each of them a drink. Get a move on!"

The man did not understand; so Will translated into German, but he stood like a wooden image, watching the first officer's face.

"You order him, then!" said Will.

The first officer snarled, spat and ordered otherwise.

"Return to the deck, you! *Schnell!*"

He watched him stow the trouble-light and clamber up the ladder.

"Cholera—if this is cholera—is it cholera? The crew can not be spared. You—you care for the sick. Choose an orderly from among them—two—three orderlies—as many as you wish. Make them be useful! That is better for them than to lie like swine in the hold here, dying of dirt and laziness!"

"Me for some air!" said Yerkes, gasping. "Come on!" he called to me.

The first officer was disposed to insist on priority, but we each took a shoulder and flung him back behind us so that he had to climb out last. When we reached the deck, Yerkes and I were sick—no, not seasick. The German was able to make his way below the bridge and shout to the captain.

We could not hear a word of shout or answer, but presently he called us; and there wasn't any good or glory to be had from clinging to a stanchion with water swirling about our feet, so we obeyed. The captain—all brass braid, belly and pomp, came down to the saloon deck to reduce the distance he had to do his cooing from; he had a megaphone under his arm, but did not need to use it.

"Is it what is supposed?" he demanded, holding up a finger and closing one eye semi-confidentially.

"Yes, you fat swab, it's cholera!" roared Yerkes. "Cholera. D'you hear! Cholera!"

The first officer made a jump for the passageway leading aft and stood blocking it. When he shouted over his shoulder, men in uniform came and stood behind him—I could not see how many, but our return toward the cabins was cut off.

"Then you sday dhere!" the captain bellowed," flaring up. "You are infected! You both sday dhere an' care for dhem!"

"You fat blackguard!" Yerkes yelled back at him, pitching his voice against the storm. "That fore-peak's no better than hell! It's inhuman! Your ship's a disgrace! Give me the second-class for a sick-bay and I'll take charge of it—otherwise, do your own dirty work!"

THE captain answered in German, too enraged by the refusal to be browbeaten, for thought in any language but his own. Will answered him

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in the same tongue—not grammatically—even I knew that—but in a sort of patois, stuffed and made pungent with Yankee slang. The argument went on minute after minute until the captain turned his back and swaggered out of sight.

"And that means," said Will, turning to me with a wry face, "that you and I are marooned out here, threatened with death if we try to go aft, and ordered to care for the cholera patients! Why didn't you stay with Monty!"

Armed sailors appeared and took station at points of vantage—one, for instance, leaned over the rail of the upper deck with a pistol in his hand. And it seemed there was a speaking-tube to the fo'castle, put to good use already. Out of the fo'castle door firemen and sailors came stampeding, dragging their belongings aft, struggling to be first through the narrow opening, some of them falling, belongings and all, into the filthy water that swished back and forth.

The fo'castle was as empty in five minutes as a loft the rats had left. The whole fore-part of the ship had become an abandoned wilderness. Twenty miserable goats, on the fo'castle-head beyond the anchors, and the stricken third-class crowd below-deck were the only life besides ourselves.

"So now you have your sick-bay!" sneered the first officer, returning to view us from behind the protecting bulk of the armed sentry. "Make yourselves at home! Choose orderlies and make them work! If they will not work, throw them overboard! The doctor's stores shall be brought forward presently. Cooking-implements are in the deck galley. You may have the goats for food. Rice, potatoes, coffee, sugar and some canned milk shall be sent."

"How about brandy?" Yerkes demanded.

"There is no brandy."

"You —— liar! What keeps your slob of a skipper's nose that bright cherry red? Send down a case of brandy or I'll show you what real trouble means!"

"No brandy!" he answered.

"Suit yourself!" said Yerkes. "Brandy—or I'll see to it the whole blamed ship's infected!"

The first officer disappeared, and the sailors he left on guard took the bull by the horns in true Teutonic spirit with a threatening display of firearms.

"Monty!" yelled Yerkes. "Oh, Monty! Monty!"

There came a sound of struggling, as bovine bodies barred the way against two determined gentlemen. In another minute Fred Oakes burst between two seamen and emerged into wind and rain. Through the gap thus left strode Monty, looking mightily unconcerned—a sure enough sign he was in fighting trim.

"What's the little game?" he asked.

"Stand back, old man!" said Yerkes, before telling him.

Fred and Monty asked questions simultaneously; Yerkes and I blurted answers, the whole entertainment being interpersed with rough-house business as the seamen struggled to force Monty in again. They did not seem to care whether Fred became infected or not, but that did not prevent Fred from swinging a fist like a club in Monty's cause. It was a funny little fracas, ending in stalemate when Monty became jammed in the passage entrance, unable to advance another foot, yet able to hold his ground, Fred out in the open, covered by a pistol—they seemed anxious not to hurt Monty, but perfectly willing to shoot Fred—and everybody breathless—Yerkes and I with laughter.

"I wish you'd go to my cabin," said Yerkes, "and get my private papers; put 'em with your own."

"Right you are," said Monty, "but—d'you propose to stand the gaff forward there?"

"Nothing else for it!" said Yerkes. "Some one's got to! Seems I'm the goat! But by Gorry! if I don't bring Heinie to book for this, my name's not what I think it is."

"Get even with them, eh?"

"I wish you could have one look at that fore-peak!"

"How about you?" asked Monty, and I laughed.

One point of his mustache had been knocked up and the other down in the struggle, and he looked drunken—before 9 A.M. It did not occur to me to wonder what I looked like.

"I've no papers!" I answered. "Nothing worth rescuing in my cabin."

"How about the cholera?"

"How about Yerkes?" I answered. "Did you suppose I'd leave him—if they'd let me?"

I was young in those days, and Monty, I supposed, recognized extenuating circum-

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stances. At any rate, he withheld the deserved snub for sounding my own horn.

"Anything besides the papers?" he asked.

"Yes," said Yerkes. "Brandy—and then brandy!"

But, as he said that, a steward came staggering down the passage with a case of "Beehive"—low quality export stuff—and shoved it against Monty's legs. One way and another the lot of them contrived to kick it out toward us, where it promptly slid into the scupper. Only the devils of the East Coast stormy season know what prevented the waves from smashing it. I made a slide, rescued it and sat on it to keep it still.

"Anything else?" asked Monty.

"See they send forward any medical books the doctor had in his quarters!"

"That all? See you later, then!"

There was nothing reasonable in my feeling disappointed and discouraged when Monty turned his back and Oakes followed him. All either man need have done by breaking away from the guard and joining us would have been to excommunicate the entire party without any compensating advantage. But one does not reason—one is merely sentimental—in most tight places.

"Come on!" said Yerkes, and he and I carried the case of brandy forward.

We took it into the fo'castle, a fine, big, roomy place divided down the center to keep firemen and seamen separate. We smashed the case open, removed one bottle, hid the rest in a locker, took a stiff drink apiece and were ready to begin. But first and last it was Will Yerkes who led the assault on that situation. I merely obstructed and obeyed him.

"Is it really cholera?" I asked.

We descended again cautiously into the dark fore-peak, I carrying a bucket of fresh water, he the brandy, and both of us coughing and sneezing at the stench.

"Are you sure it's cholera?"

"I wouldn't bet tomorrow's Tuesday," he answered. "My mother's oldest brother was a surgeon in our Civil War. He died before I met him; that's the nearest I ever came to qualifying for a sawbones. But I surmise—eh—what would you say? Whew!"

We dosed out brandy and water—some water, some brandy and some both. There were two stone-dead ones, tossed and stiffening into gargoyle angles, one in a hammock and one in a bunk against the wall. We chose four who were not sick—only numbed and wretched—and made them carry the corpses upon deck, I climbing up the ladder ahead to superintend. A bigger wave than usual met the burial party, and the lot of us, corpses included, went spluttering and rolling down to the scuppers, to the captain's huge amusement.

I could find nothing handy to throw at the brute, and fist-shaking seemed futile and inadequate; so we threw the corpses overboard and he had his laugh out undisturbed. Then I took my gang below, gave them more brandy and saw Yerkes in the gloom sorting out the worst cases from the less appalling ones. Cholera takes hold quickly when it comes.

"Why didn't they stampede for fresh air when the thing began?" I wondered.

"I've asked that," said Yerkes. "There's a Hindoo here speaks English—he's got it badly, though." Conversation was difficult because whenever the ship pitched more than usually wild victims would fall from the knife-board bunks and either lie rolling and screaming about the floor or try to struggle back again, lamenting loudly. "Two of them realized what was happening—had seen cholera before—ran aft—told some officer—driven forward again on the run, kicked down here—door locked on the lot of 'em!

"That's why there was no stampede! Two hours later, he says, somebody came with four sailors and dragged out the worst cases—three—that'll be the three they threw overboard before they were dead. Then they were locked in again—so he says. Then we came!"

I JOINED in the hunt, and, between us, we found a dozen men not evidently sick, although bereft of energy even when physicked with raw brandy. I told them off and we began carrying out the others, for, as Yerkes said, the first thing was to get the poor devils out of hell into the cleaner, roomier fo'castle. I had got to the foot of the ladder with the first case when the opening darkened and I saw a man's leg feeling for the top step. It was a woman I was helping carry—Lord knows her tribe or nation; she and her shriveled husband died that night, and their scrawny young one followed them over-

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board at dawn. We set the woman down, and a moment later I saw something I recognized.

"For God's sake, Monty," I shouted, "get back out of here! Death's at work in this hole! Keep back!"

Yerkes heard me and came galloping, crashing from side to side of the chamber of horrors and stumbling over prostrate bodies. His voice rose to a squawk like a peacock's.

"You get out o' here, Monty! You've no call in this hole! You belong on the upper deck! Get back up that ladder or I'll knock your block off!"

Monty came on, feeling his way gingerly. I saw legs and heard another voice behind him.

"Didums, you —— fool, d'you expect me to stand all night on these steps holding this dunnage! Go ahead; can't you?"

Between the front and rear fire Monty coolly pursued his way, taking no chances of missing a step; but Fred was less cautious and more unwieldy. It was I who caught the two of them a moment later, collapsing under them and a pile of heterogeneous stuff only just in time to save the woman from a swifter and perhaps more merciful death than the one actually awaiting her.

"Now, you've done it!" said Yerkes, pulling us all up. "You've done it, Monty!"

"Done what?"

"You're defiled!"

"The devil you say! I've brought chocolates—tobacco—cigarets—matches—some books—my chessmen—and a bottle of *eau de cologne*—by gad, it seems to me we're going to need that! There's soap in that package—two dozen cakes—tooth-powder, tooth-brushes—a sponge or two—towels—call that defilement, do you? —— if it looks that way to me!"

"I mean you're infected," said Yerkes. "You shouldn't have come!"

"Fred's got a big box of prunes," said Monty, "and our hair-brushes. Got 'em all—haven't you, Fred? Socks—drawers—clean shirts—and I think the rest is blankets—company's blankets—didn't see the sense of spoiling our own—left 'em in the cabin. I've got your private papers with mine and the gang's in my pocketbook; so now we're all right."

"Didums, you idiot, you've forgotten my concertina!" said Fred.

"No, old dear—it rolled forward there into the dark when we stumbled. Look for it!"

"You shouldn't have taken this chance!" said Yerkes.

"Shouldn't I? Gad but there's a merry little panic aft! The passengers have formed themselves into a sanitary corps! They've hung sheets in the passageways and squirted 'em with alcohol. The doctor person thinks he can brew carbolic out of the bunker coal, and has gone to work. The professor is disinfecting seamen and firemen! It's a pleasant process: the two commercial people make 'em strip in the saloon; the professor doses out alcohol; and the seamen rub one another from head to foot with it. It takes professor and both assistants to keep 'em from drinking the lotion!"

"But what did you come forward for?" demanded Yerkes.

"We're headed for Dar es Salaam," said Monty. "The captain's theory is that if we made Zanzibar first—as of course we should—the British authorities would force friendly help on him—disinfect the ship—and discover what's under the hatches! Any or all kinds of trouble might come out of that! Feel 'em crowding her! Feel the old tub shake! Let's hope her boilers stand the racket!"

"If we reach Dar es Salaam alive," said Yerkes, "they'll quarantine you there and take darned good care you never get away alive to tell of what you've seen! You should have stayed aft and played politics!"

"Let's get ahead with the business, shall we?" Monty answered. "Suppose you give the orders. If Fred don't obey, just tell me and we'll put him down and tickle him. Ever hear Fred scream when he's tickled? Like a dying mule! What's the first trick? Carry 'em out of here, eh? That ought to meet with majority approval! Lead on, then, MacDuff!"

I was MacDuff. I captained the hoisting of the stricken woman up those stairs, and laid her in a clean bunk in the port fo'castle. Yerkes decreed the starboard section was for doubtfuls and convalescents—"s'posin' there be any!" Monty followed next with his unsteady gang and the woman's presumptive husband. Then Fred came, blowing like a grampus, shepherding the resurrection out of Hades of a giant black man of perfectly uncertain origin—perhaps a Seedeeboy. Yerkes brought the one child in his arms, and the game began again.

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Some of them could walk up the accommodation ladder. Some could get up with the aid of a little shoving and pulling; but most of them had to be carried, and one actually died in his bearers' arms on the way up, cursing and screaming—vowing we were murdering him. Quite a number of them seemed to think they need expect no mercy.

When at length we had the last one carried up and all sorted as best we could guess, worst cases to port, not so bad to starboard, Yerkes reeled and slipped aft again to stand below the bridge and shout for jointed pipe, some packing and white lead, and steam on the forward-deck winch. There was a long argument before he got any of it. But Fred and I reenforced him, and while he threatened we actually made shift to open the forward hatch. As that would have let into the hold every wave that passed us the time o' day, and the only way to stop us would have been by shooting, we won the point; thenceforward we held the whip-hand as far as concerned supplies.

They brought us the stores—or at least some of the stores—from the doctor's quarters, and we carried those forward, I nearly breaking a leg when a more than usually heavy wave caught me waist-high and flung me across-deck. Then came the pipes, connected by a universal joint. We were not exactly experts, but all rough-and-ready tinkers in steam—mining prospectors mostly have to be, and, as for me, one learns to humor the steam-winch on pretty nearly any big sailing-ship.

We needed no teaching from Yerkes to disconnect the steam-pipe on the winch and add our new one to it, leading down into the fore-peak. It fell to me to take a handful of waste and go down and scald out the dungeon. I came out after ten minutes, boiled and unable to endure another second of the heat and stench, but I left the belching steam-pipe down there, and we did not signal for steam off until evening.

"Cooked cholera microbes may be as efficient as raw ones, for all I know," said Yerkes, "but at least we've cooked 'em!"

That was the principle we mostly worked on—not at all sure that any of the steps we took were really orthodox. We eschewed the unforgivable offense of doing nothing. Monty, who had commanded a squadron in British India and then served as political "resident" in a native state, was really the most experienced; but—as he said—"experience, don't you know, is mere sight-seeing unless you do it yourself," and Will Yerkes, with his Amazon travels behind him and with his Yankee inventiveness, very rightly kept the lead.

But Monty was a wonder, nevertheless. It was he who kept us good-tempered—he who turned every lament into a joke—Monty who cooked astonishingly appetizing meals in the sheet-iron open-air galley, although I butchered the first goat—the Earl of Montdidier and Kirkubrightshire, P. C., K.C.B., etc., who saw to the fo'castle scrubbing and most of the desperately dirty work. Whenever four jobs turned up at once—or fourteen—or forty-four, as happened oftener—it was always he who promptly took hold of the meanest. And it was he—or rather his example, that presently brought us help from an unexpected quarter.

THE THREE mean whites in the second-class saloon got thoroughly drunk on receipt of the news of cholera. They remained drunk a day and a night, after which liquor supplies were discontinued by captain's orders, and they were sent for to go aft and serve in various capacities. The fallen—or unrisen—Englishman has characteristics which fail to ingratiate him with the world at large. Those three men—Jones, Howard and Hill they said their names were—divided unpleasant ingenuity between efforts to burst themselves on first-class cabin food and to assert unholy pride of race.

Being put on rations because of too monstrous appetite, they forthwith refused to take orders from "furriners" and were finally left to loaf at will, scorned and scornful. So they came and leaned their elbows on the forward rail of the upper deck to smoke and gaze down on us and, after ten or twenty minutes of desultory contemplation, beheld Monty emptying slops. I was directly underneath them, engaged on certain laundry work that lingers unsweetly on the memory.

The wind had lulled and the sea was falling. Voices, pitched high, fell clearly.

"D'yer mark that?" said one of them—I don't know which.

"What d'yer take me for—a bloody mole? I can see, can't I?"

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"An' him an earl!" said the third in awe-struck tones. "A perishin' gor-blimy earl a-emptyin' slops!"

"And us a-lookin' on!" resumed the first. "What, oh!"

"Did the Germans make 'im go forrard?"

"Not 'im! If they can't make us do nothin', what price 'is kind? 'E took an' went!"

"Why the ——? Is 'e crazy, or what?"

"Them others are 'is mates."

"Earls? Barons? Baronites? Bunch o' blooming members o' the 'Ouse o' Lords? One's an American, ain't he?"

"Bunch o' nothin'! Pick-ups! 'Im an' them's partners. Germans sent two of 'em forrard an' dared 'em wi' goons to come aft again. 'E goes an' fetches some o' their things from the cabins an' starts forrard too. Germans dares 'im. 'E dares them—I 'eard 'im! Say, that earl's a treat when it comes to 'avin' 'is own way! 'E refuses to talk German to 'em so the captain 'as to talk English, an' I 'eard it all. Cool as a cucumber 'e was. Says the captain, 'You stay aft! Your life is valuable!' Says 'e, 'You go to ——, for yours isn't!'

"Says the captain, 'I forbids you to go forrard.' Says 'e, 'You 'as your bleedin' choice! You permits me to go forrard, or you submits to the mortification o' seein' your 'and forced! I'll not tell you what I'll bloomin' well do,' 'e says, 'but I'll do it, an' you look out! Haw!' 'e says. Then the blinkin' captain tries to mollify 'im. 'Milaw,' 'e says, 'I will gif you leaf to go forrard if you vish, but vy do not ve shake 'an's an' let bygones be bygones?' "

"Go on! Did 'e? What did the earl say to that?"

"'E says, 'I'd sooner shake 'ands with a vulture than you! I'm goin' forrard,' 'e says. 'Haw!' says 'e. 'An' I'm goin' to kill the swine what tries to stop me,' 'e says, 'an' that's all I've got to say to you until I sees you on a gallows, Captain Fingelmann!' 'e says. An' 'e goes forrard, sure as I'm a standin' 'ere, an' t'other one—'im wi' a beard what plays a concertina—follers 'im, both of 'em loaded down wi' cabin things an' what not."

"An' now 'e's emptyin' slops!"

"That's 'im!"

There followed a long pause. Then—

"'As them sailors below got goons?"

"Pistols an' rifles!"

"D'yer suppose they'd shoot?"

"What? Meanin' if the earl an' them others was to try an' break back an' bring the cholery aft? You bet they'd shoot!"

Followed another long pause.

"I don't see 'as 'ow an earl's better an' what other folks are!"

"Same 'ere!"

Yet another pause.

"I bet yer I can empty slops as well as 'im!"

"Better!"

"Nor I'm no more afraid nor what 'e is!"

"'Oo said 'oo's afraid?"

"D'yer suppose them sentries 'ud shoot?"

"What if they do? Bullets or cholery? 'Oo cares?"

"Bullets is quick—cholery 'urts like——!"

"Maybe we don't get cholery if we stay aft."

Another, longer pause, during which I stirred with a pole in a tub full of suds—and other things.

"We'd need terbaccer along."

"An' blankets!"

"An' liquor if we can get it!"

"But we can't!"

"Well—'oo are we waitin' for?"

"'Oo's waitin'? I ain't goin' to be outdid by no bleedin' earl—not if I knows it! Let's go to the cabin an' get our things."

"Come on, then. 'Eaps o' terbaccer, mind! Rush the sentries, an' tell the bleedin' earl ——"

"Tell the bleedin' earl nothin'! Rush nothin'! We strolls forward, casual, same as what 'e does. We passes remarks to the sentry, same as 'im. 'Stand to one side,' says we, 'or get yer bloomin' jaw punched!' They stands aside, bein' square'eads an' not 'avin' no specific orders to do nothin' except prevent any one from comin' back aft. We continues forward, 'ands in our pocket casual like——"

"'Ands in our pockets, an' terbaccer an' blankets an' lord knows what—fat'ead!"

"We strolls forward an' says to 'im, ''Ullo! Thought we'd come an' lend a 'and!' says we. 'Thought as 'ow maybe you didn't care to 'og all the blame,' we says. That's the way to do it, dignified an' proper."

"'Oo's to do the talkin'?"

"You!"

"No, you!"

"Well—let 'Oward do it. 'E's got the gift o' the gab!"

"Garn! You proposed it. Do your own work!"

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Whatever they settled—and they left the rail still arguing—it is quite certain something different transpired. In the first place the sentry let them pass with a grin of evil import but no argument, for, just as I had overheard their conversation by dint of keen attention from below, some one on the bridge had very easily overheard it from above them. While they went to their cabin to get things, orders were given to the sentry that left no margin for misunderstanding. They were welcome to go forward whenever they chose, but by no means welcome back again.

Then, dignity was lacking. The rolling of the ship provided for that. One of them stepped on the blanket he was carrying, stumbled, slipped on the wet deck and fell headlong. I suspect he was intended to be spokesman. Monty, by that time smoking on an up-ended bucket ouside the fo'castle door, witnessed the whole proceeding without a smile.

Fearfully self-consciously they staggered forward and stood holding to one another in front of Monty, looking exactly like deserters surrendering themselves. Monty surveyed them calmly, at some length.

"So you men have decided to offer your services, have you?" he asked at last.

"Yes, sir."

"Yes, my lord."

"We was ashamed to see you doin' dirty work, my lord!"

"I never did dirty work in my life!" snapped Monty. "God helping me, I never will! Are you all three Englishmen?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Well—we all know that Englishmen are supposed to do their duty. That's what being an Englishman means. You men came very near forgetting what you are—much too near! Twenty-four hours is too long for a man to take considering between shame and duty. England and the United States are standing together here. Go and report yourselves to Mr. Yerkes; we're all taking orders from him."

"Yes, sir! Very good, sir!"

"Yes, my lord!"

"Certainly, your lordship!"

"I hope to see you three men behave creditably. I shall look for courage—exemplary conduct—instant obedience to Mr. Yerkes. I expect to be proud of my countrymen."

"Certainly, my lord!"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Yes, indeed, your lordship!"

"Very well. Report to Mr. Yerkes."

I hurried inside on some excuse or other, for I wanted to see the reception. Yerkes was on the starboard side taking temperatures—about an average of one an hour was taken worse and had to be carried to the port side—and that as a rule meant overboard within the day.

"Oh, hello!" he said, continuing his labors.

"Report for duty, sir."

"'Is lordship's horders to report for duty, sir."

"'E said—'is lordship said as 'ow——"

"I see," said Yerkes. "I see." He went on taking temperatures. "What are your names?"

They told him.

"Well—I don't see how you men can help. This job's dangerous."

"Beggin' your pardon?"

"I don't understand, sir."

"We wasn't lookin' f'r no birfday party!"

"Now—if I'd anything safe for you to turn your hands to—but—I'd get out of here if I were you; you might catch something!"

"Which what I catches is my own affair!" remarked the first man, with gathering choler.

"Besides, we're short of brandy," said Yerkes. "Can't afford to lose what little we've got!"

"Meanin' as 'ow you suspects us o' wantin' brandy?"

"Meaning brandy is scarce!" said Yerkes. "I've always heard that passengers one meets on these German coastwise ships are—I've been told all kinds of things. Of course, seeing's believing."

"We came forrard free an' willin'!" asserted the man whom the other two addressed as "'Oward."

"I couldn't make use of timid men," said Yerkes.

"Which it's time to call names when the pitcher's busted!" said he who said his name was Jones.

For reasons none of us could have specified we were all quite sure it wasn't really Jones, but he answered to it, and died under his chosen flag like a gallant man when the time came.

"We're ready an' willing, sir!" announced the third man—Hill.

"I could try you, of course," said Yerkes. "But if the brandy disappeared, or ——"

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AT THAT moment Fred Oakes pushed his head through the door that communicated between port and starboard sides of the fo'castle.

"Three more of the poor devils dead!" he announced.

The new arrivals flinched perceptibly and turned a ghastly hue.

"Offer them brandy," said Yerkes to me.

"No, sir, no brandy, thanks!"

"None for me neither!"

"Nor me!"

"You'll be wantin' somebody to 'eave them stiffs overside, sir!"

"Come on, mates! Shall we go to work, sir?"

"I'll try you," said Yerkes.

A moment later Jones and 'Oward and 'Ill emerged through the fo'castle door into daylight, carrying a corpse apiece. They looked like devils emerging from the pit to dance a grizzly measure, for the *Bundesrath* rolled and pitched with drunken uncertainty, and the storm, that had lulled but a while ago, was beginning again to shriek through the rigging and funnel stays. Up forward where we were the motion was at its worst.

To waltz and stagger and reel and slide and trip and roll into the scuppers with a yet unstiffened cholera corpse is an adventure to prove or break forever a man's courage. They made the gruesome votive offering to the uneclectic sharks and returned, one behind the other, drawn and scared. I followed again into the fo'castle to see and hear.

"What next, sir?"

"Whatever you say now, sir!"

"Ready f'r anything you say, sir!"

The mean whites had reverted true to type! Yerkes set them to scrubbing. Our orderlies had all curled up with the dread disease and, although, after the swift way of that swiftest, deadliest epidemic, we already had convalescents, they were all too weak both in mind and body to work. Three new unskilful, but unparticular, assistants were a solution, almost, of our worst difficulty.

Thenceforward we had more time for saving life and needed rather less for the disheartening business of jettisoning disused shells of men; but they died, nevertheless, like flies on a poisoned paper, and half that fo'castle was empty before three days were gone.

What little sleep we took was in turns, in bunks on the starboard side, where the not-yet-badly stricken and the few convalescents were. Fred spent some of his short spells of relaxation wringing wild music from the concertina in hope, no doubt, of raising the spirits of the patients; but the effort did not accomplish much, although he raised his own to some extent.

We bellowed choruses, but the bellowing was out of a defiant, not a hopeful, mood; and even on the fifth day out from Beira, when there began to dawn the semblance of a chance that, after all, we might save twenty per cent. of that miserable list alive, including probably ourselves, we were not much encouraged. Gloom had begun to settle down on us. Even Monty, prince, not of optimists, but of last ditch die-hards, found it difficult to keep those waxed ends of his black mustache from drooping.

"I don't see much good in it for us!" said I. "If we reach Dar es Salaam alive, it's more than I can believe that these Germans'll have the gall to let us get away alive with the tale of how they behaved! They'd be ashamed to!"

"I fancy you flatter them!" said Monty gloomily.

"Let's sink the —— ship and be done with it!" urged Fred, more than half-seriously.

I turned in and went to sleep with that proposition of Fred's repeating itself again and again, conjuring up wild and ever wilder pictures in my fevered imagination. It was my "watch below" until midnight, and when Monty called me I went out as usual for a breath of fresh air before going the rounds of gruesome cases to try and guess which would live—which die before morning.

I stood looking aft, accustoming my eyes to the murk of a storm that seemed never-ending, filling my lungs with the wet, warm air. There was no sign of stars or full moon. I could scarcely see the rain that drummed on the swaying deck, and the port, starboard and mast-head lights were like colored pin-pricks in the blackness. Yet it seemed to me there was a sort of luminosity.

The wind—sou'westerly—was on the port quarter, blowing big guns, drowning everything except the thunder of great waves and rattle of rain. Yet once or twice it seemed to me I heard shouting. I looked

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back into the fo'castle. Monty was sitting beside his bunk, pulling off shoes preparatory to turning in.

"Come and look!" said I, and for a while he came and stood barefooted beside me, sheltered more or less from the downpour by the door he leaned against.

"What d'you make of it?" said I.

"Fire!" said he, and we both sniffed.

It may have been imagination, but I certainly thought I smelled burning more than once, when either the wind or our helm shifted for a moment. But there were no sparks, and the heat was no doubt climatic.

"Call Will," he said; so I fetched Yerkes out of the port side, where he had been spraying brandy on a man's set lips with Monty's hair-restorer bottle. Fred from his bunk saw us making for the door, and followed.

"If it is fire, it's not a big one yet," said Yerkes.

"In this wind, ducky, a one-horse fire would pretty soon make hell look like an iceberg!" argued Fred. And then all at once we all saw sparks burst out away back aft and stream down-wind.

"By jove, it may be the professor's alcohol sheets!" grinned Monty. "If somebody dropped a lighted match or cigaret on one of those——"

"The whole first-class saloon's alight!" said Fred. "Let's get up on the fo'castle head and see better!"

We clambered up to where the miserable goats were cowering under a strip of tight-laced canvas, but even from there we could not be sure. Again and again sparks flew in streams, but after each outburst all grew black again—only with that same peculiar luminous quality I had noticed first.

"If she is on fire," said Monty, bellowing in my ear.

"If she's what?" yelled Yerkes.

"If she's on fire, we've scarcely one chance in a million! No small boat could live!"

My place was inside and I clambered down again off the fo'castle head, but the others stayed up there until dawn. When I awoke our three new assistants at peep o' day to bury the night's grim harvest and went out to watch them heave the poor husks overside, Fred, Yerkes, and Monty were still staring aft; and now there was no question of what the matter might be. A greasy, black column of smoke bathed the ship's whole upper deck and streamed to leeward.

The three no-longer-mean whites performed their allotted task, and halted before Monty, who had climbed down beside me.

"Grim work ahead, men!" he said, and one—he who said his name was Jones—saluted, military style.

All sorts of gestures pass muster for salute the wide world over, but the British military token of respect is unmistakable by any one who knows.

"Deserter or time expired?" I wondered aloud, and Monty heard me.

"We won't question a brave man's past," he said. "I've a notion he'll die as game as any of us!"

"The end isn't yet!" I said. "If this rain holds, it'll squelch almost any fire."

"Almost—but not quite," said Monty. "Look!"

AS HE spoke, the wind changed for a moment in one of those baffling squalls that make of that East Coast no drunken sailor's paradise. The smoke pall shifted and streamed at right-angles to our course, and we could see the whole ship's length for a moment. Near the stern the lower part of the stream of smoke glowed red, and for one second we caught the roar and sizzle of a wetted holocaust.

"This ship is doomed!" said Monty. "Her holds are chock-a-block with ammunition and guns! I suspect the ammunition's forward under this hatch—that'll be why they're not anxious about it yet! See for yourself whether a boat could be launched—let alone live in that sea! Draw your own conclusions!"

The gloomiest speech I had ever heard Monty make! The least resolute! By all odds the most disturbing—for if Monty should lose his poise it seemed to me there was little chance of the rest of us proving masters of all that evil circumstance. Yet to have blamed him would have been rankly unfair, just as it would have been impudence to pity. But a fellow could understand.

I, for instance, had nothing much to lose and a hard time ahead whichever way the cat should jump, for I had my way to make in the world, and nobody but me to worry if I failed to do it. But for a man with a gallant record and a title nearly as ancient

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as the King of England's to be obliged to die in the cholera ward of a German hell-ship was an ugly fence to face. I began to appreciate what it must have meant to him to sally forward to join Yerkes and me—not that I could imagine him now not doing it.

Whether it was reasoned judgment or just instinct that had warned him, he proved wholly right in the matter of the *Bundesrath*—nor was he the only one to guess how little chance we ourselves had. Captain Fingelmann and his friends carried probability on to the verge of certainty almost as soon as Monty's back was turned. I sat on the step staring aft, fascinated by the billowing smoke and the picture it all made—lumbering, wallowing ship—wild weather—crackle and glare of doom—when men came and began to nail boards across the passageways on each side leading aft.

"Come and look, Monty!" I called, and all six—our three new recruits too—came to see.

Monty laughed dryly.

"It's what I supposed," he said. "The ammunition's forward under this hatch—guns and stores aft. They're trying to put a fireproof bulkhead between them and the explosive stuff. They don't think much of the ship's chance!"

"I guess they're figuring on releasing the sentries for fire-fighting," said Yerkes.

"Or boat drill!" said I. "They're clearing boats away—look!"

"I wish I knew just where we are," said Monty. "I expect they're planning to run in close to some part of the coast where there's a chance to land from small boats. They're counting on keeping the hooker afloat until they're near enough to save their own skins. Then they'll either scuttle her or watch the explosion."

"It's a safe bet they'll leave no boats for us!" said Yerkes.

"I propose we build a raft!" said Monty.

"How can we build a raft," said I, "without being seen from the bridge? They'd probably fire on us!"

"Why the devil didn't we bring our own guns and ammunition aft?" Fred grumbled. "D'you suppose we could take 'em by surprize—swarm to the upper deck (the accommodation ladder had been taken away long ago) storm the bridge—and play general hell until something came of it?"

But general hell came before any one could answer. Very sick men—so sick that they expect death—and especially men sick with the dreadful plagues which haunt the tropics display occasionally what amounts to second sight. Lingering along the borderland between one existence and another, they see, as it were, out of both eyes; such things as partitions, bulkheads, curtains, doors no longer have power to confine their vision. And having determined on death by one route, perhaps having ceased to fear it in the shape that they expect, they resent it—fear it—fight it frantically in any unexpected form.

One of our tortured poor Hindoos on the port side either smelled, heard, or divined the impending holocaust that should rob him of his chosen route across the border. He sat up and screamed. He shouted to the others. He leaped from the bunk, as a corpse might come from a sepulcher at the crack of doom. New fear lent him frenzy—frenzy that breaks all laws except the one law that it must destroy itself. Frenzy gave him strength.

In a moment he was beating on our backs to force a way out into the open. We turned and closed with him, he fighting with the immeasurable efforts of a madman. The poor, weak, tortured thing, that but an hour ago could scarcely lift his head for liquid nourishment, now had all seven of us busy trying to force him back to bed. And that disturbance set most of the rest agog.

There were some too feeble to respond. There were a few too far on the road toward recovery to be influenced by shadows of Death Valley, but the rest leaped into panic as the flames leap out in a jungle-fire.

While we fought with the first man, six others ran for the door. Yerkes, Fred, I and two of the new men rushed out after them, and might as well have tried to catch ghosts on the brink of the pit. The helpless, hopeless human shadows slid, staggered and rolled, until they all lay screaming along the scuppers. One man got up and jumped overboard. Another followed him. Before we could come near enough to pounce on the rest, the fo'castle behind us began to empty itself past Monty.

I saw him trip over the coaming and fall backward. I caught sight of Yerkes, too, thrown off his feet by the rush of the madmen and a staggering blow as the *Bundesrath* shoved her great ugly nose into a sea. The sea seemed to be coming three ways, and the wind to be quartering them all so

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that we struggled, as it were, above an earthquake. The men out of death-beds had surer feet than we.

The scene that followed under the racing smoke and clouds, amid rain and spray and sparks, lingers in memory like a story of the Inquisition, or of Dante's dream of hell. Some of them, yelling like fiends, jumped overboard. Some—more frenzied and therefore capable of wilder effort than the rest—seized the fallen ones by arms and head and feet and hove them into the sea as if they were corpses. Some leaped and scrabbled at the newly nailed-up boards that shut us off forward. And some of them simply fought—insane—with the fury of animals, not knowing why they fought, or whom.

We were powerless to help or hinder them. If four of us held one man and forced him back through the door, that only left fewer to protect the sane ones; and the moment we took pressure off his limbs the held one would be gone again.

One tortured maniac clambered to the fo'castle head and hove into the sea the few miserable goats remaining. Then he jumped after them, with a yell that pierced through the raging wind and curdled blood already all but frozen by the scene. Three of them attacked me so that I had to use my fists on creatures I had chanced more than an arm to succor. Strangely enough, it did not trouble me. It was like a dream—things happening without connection and passing in review without effect. Even Monty—Yerkes—Oakes—and the formerly-mean white trio—were like specters, and I the only actually living one.

It may be that I would have jumped overboard presently, for when a man gets to that state of watching all about him dispassionately, as if it were panorama passing across a screen, there is no foretelling. But another vision brought me back to the land of the living—to good, sound wrath—to action.

I glanced up at the bridge. Two officers—the captain and another one—were clinging, each with both hands, to the bridge-rail and laughing down at us—roaring with laughter. There was something to turn on and deal with—something I could do! I searched about swiftly—found an iron ring and flung it. The missile was unexpected, and caught the captain full and square in the face. He answered with three prompt pistol-shots, all of which missed me; and then what had been panic became the deliberate storming of the gates of death.

Furor teutonicus or some such malady took possession of the bridge gang, and the two of them opened fire with their pistols on every living thing forward of their bulkhead. We ran for the fo'castle, but the cholera victims tried to tear the hatches off and build something—shelter, perhaps, or a raft. The bullets preventing that, they tried to climb to the upper deck and wreak they alone could guess what vengeance. They were shot down with as little mercy as the stockyard swine expect and get.

STANDING well back in the gloom within the fo'castle — they fired whenever one of us approached the door close enough to be visible from the bridge—I saw the great billow of smoke blaze suddenly red and then the whole stern of the ship burst into flame with a roar like artillery. Against that red background I could see the engine-room staff—officers, stokers, oilers and all—swarming among the boats.

"Where's Jones?" asked Monty suddenly, but I did not turn to hunt for him, although I think the others did.

The firing ceased. I suppose there were no more targets. I heard the others behind me rounding up the few poor devils who had not had strength or frenzy enough to run amuck, getting them ready, I suppose, to carry out. I did not see just what good that would do. There was not much choice that I could see between death by explosion, death by cholera, or death by drowning. Only, I did not choose to die with one of that captain's bullets in my brain. I continued gazing aft; so presently I saw Jones—the mean white—he who had saluted. He was crawling backward along the scupper toward me, stopping to sham dead whenever any one on the bridge looked likely to see him. But they were not paying much further attention to us from the bridge—nor to anything except the manning and handling of the boats.

"How did you come to be forward there?" I asked, as Jones slipped into the fo'castle.

"Where's 'is lordship?" he demanded.

So I called Monty, and he came.

"Beg pardon, my lord. I can get us a boat, or I think I can."

"How?" asked Monty.

"I've been up once. I can crawl to the

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bridge an' climb up by a stanchion an' a line what's 'angin' there. I'd 'a' stayed up an' done what I was minded to, on'y I thought as 'ow you might think I was stampedin' like them poor devils—or takin' sides wi' Germans—or playin' my own 'and, or what not. I wants it known an' understood I'm playin' the game as you'd 'ave me do it, sir!"

"All right, my man," said Monty.

"Then, beggin' y'r leave, my lord, I'd like orders!"

Monty understood.

"What is it?" he asked. "Private—corporal—sergeant?"

"Sergeant-major, sir!"

"Very well, Sergeant-major. Climb up to that bridge and get us a boat if you can! Use your own discretion after you're up there as to how you go about it, but be quick!"

"Yes, sir!"

The man saluted as he had done once before.

"Good-by—Jones!" said Monty, holding a hand out.

I wondered why he called him then by name instead of title. They shook hands.

"Thank you, my lord! I'll get ye a boat, by God! Good-by!"

In a minute he was gone, crawling once more along the scupper.

"Private," said Monty, "is all that fellow ever was! He doesn't look, talk, walk, stand, or think like a sergeant-major! Sergeant-major is probably what the poor chap hoped to be! Well, good luck to him!"

He went inside to help the others, but I was fascinated and stood just within the door, looking aft. The heat from the fire had grown terrific, and they were already trying to swing out two of the boats, waiting for the moment of more or less steadiness between the rollings. I saw one boat full of men smash to pulpwood against the hot steel side, and then I caught sight of Jones going hand over hand up the forward port bridge-stanchion.

Besides that of being seen and shot or kicked on the head, the only great risk he ran yet was of being flung off when the ship plunged in the trough of the waves. For we were lying beam-on now. They must have stopped the engines. I could no longer feel the tremble of the struggling propeller; and every other wave tumbled in over the weather bulwark.

The increased rolling made the work of lowering boats more difficult. There was no panic as yet, but something very like confusion on the boat-deck. I came out and clambered up on the fo'castle head to see better, after one glance inside to make sure that Monty and the others were putting life-belts on both cholera patients and themselves. I caught sight of Jones again in vivid black relief against the crimson flame. There was nobody on the bridge. They were all busy with the boats. He crouched on the bridge, and they did not notice him.

The first boat they lowered having met disaster, they were taking more precaution now and they swung the next one overside with only four men in her, two at each tackle. The *Bundesrath* shook to a more than usually heavy sea and reeled before it, lying right over as if she would bury her very bridge-rail. I saw the captain himself raise both hands and yell to lower away, and then Jones took his chance.

He sprang like a tiger and landed with fists and feet in the outswung boat, knocking one of the four men out of her into the sea. They had begun to lower her, hand over hand, but checked as if bewildered, and the *Bundesrath* hove herself rather more than upright so that the boat's keel clanged on the deck. That frightened the three men thoroughly. As the ship lay over before the thunder of the next oncoming wave Jones sprang at the throat of the one man remaining at the after tackle, and he followed his mate overside.

Then Jones began lowering away, faster and faster, so that the two men at the bow end had either to follow suit or see the boat up-ended. Their weight being greater, they gained speed, and the boat took the water, by the grace of the god of deep-sea accidents, on a fairly even keel. By that time Jones had an oar in his hand, and the two remaining seamen went overboard before they could guess what was happening. I suspect he broke one man's skull. He certainly hit him hard enough.

By that time another boat was smashed to flinders against the ship's side. It began to look as if captain, first-class passengers and crew would all have to do down or blow up. Jones cast off the falls and shoved against the ship's side with an oar with all his might. I looked to see him lifted off his feet and hurled backward into the sea. The captain, on the other hand, saw the

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only boat that was safely overside in the hands of a man who, whatever else he might do, certainly would not wait there for German passengers. He began shooting—pretty wildly, but fast—and I saw Jones drop his arm as one bullet found a billet.

But the boat was drifting rapidly to leeward. Jones sat and began trying to get steerageway with an oar, but with one arm useless could accomplish nothing. The captain kept on shooting at him and hit him again, for he shook his fist and then drooped.

Meanwhile the dense black smoke and lurid flame prevented me from seeing what else was going on behind the bridge. I saw one great wooden mast go overside with a crash and a roar, but lost sight of all the boats, although figures like black devils kept rushing to and fro as if trying to achieve a dozen impossibilities at once. The boat Jones had stolen drifted my way and would have lost her lee in another two minutes and perhaps been swamped in the raging sea had another miracle not happened. I remembered a lead-line that hung in a rack inside the fo'castle door and went down to get it with a speed born of fear and inspiration coupled.

"Come on, Monty!" I yelled. "Come on, all of you! Bring 'em along!"

I rushed again to the fo'castle head, stood whirling the lead in wide and wider circles and loosed it down-wind, while the captain continued shooting at poor Jones. I expected to have to haul it back and make a second, or third, or fourth attempt, and the boat was drifting all too fast. It was too much to hope that Jones could catch the line and too much to ask that the lead should fall into the boat. But a man hopes and asks for things unprecedented when all the likely things have failed and only the impossibilities remain.

I prayed as the flickering line paid out, and, prayer or no, the lead fell plumb beyond the boat with the line drawn tight across her. Jones grabbed it with his one uninjured hand, and I saw him make it fast to a thwart. Then the captain turned to fire at me—three times again—but missed. He reloaded and fired at Jones again—and hit him.

The question then was whether that flimsy lead-line was going to hold long enough for me to take advantage of it. Haul on it, I simply dared not. Make it fast to something, I must! At that minute Fred Oakes clambered up beside me to bring me one of the clumsy life-belts from the fo'castle rack.

"Put it on!" he said. "All that's left of the cholera kids are out on deck. We're ready!"

"Grab this!" I said. "Play that boat as you would a fish!"

There was a life-line—a new, stout one—coiled by the port anchor. I seized it, made a bowline in the end of it, slipped that over my shoulders and sprang for the lower deck.

"Pay that out after me!" I yelled to Monty, thrusting the coil into his hands. And then I dived for it before he could argue the point. I had only tropical clothes on, and in the lee of that great leviathan there was a chance—if only a chance.

MONTY said afterward that then the captain fired at him and succeeded in hitting two more of the cholera cases, but of that I knew nothing. I swam for my own life and the others', praying the slender line might hold. Why it held and how it held is beyond me even to guess. It parted the minute my extra weight was added to the force of wind and drift, and for a minute I clung breathless until Monty had the sense to ease away and take the strain from my shoulders and arms. I had a struggle then to clamber in, for I was tired and half-full of sea water, but I got in at last and rested beside Jones' dead body, that rolled back and forward on the bottom in a pool of bloody water.

It was time then to haul short and be swift about it. Fred Oakes came down the life-line hand-over-hand and took an oar. One of the "mean whites" followed him—Howard, I think it was—and then Monty and Yerkes and the other man began throwing the cholera cases overboard for me to fish for. There were seven, and I rescued all but one, although four more died in the boat within an hour—and little blame to them!

Then—and not till then—I remembered that Monty could not swim! And in the fierce light of the fire I saw the first officer and some sailors make a rush forward to seize the line that held us fast. I yelled. I might as well have yelled at the wallowing *Bundesrath* herself! They came down over the end of the bridge like monkeys, and the next I knew the line was loose. We were

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drifting, with Monty and Yerkes and Hill marooned behind us, murdered as likely as not.

The oars were going. I took another oar, and, between us, we brought the boat up closer to the ship, but I could not row and see what was happening as well; so, as we wallowed nearer, I started to ship the oar. As I did that, a hand seized it. In another moment I had dragged Yerkes over the side.

"Where's Monty?" I nearly screamed at him.

"Aw—can the excitement—here he is!"

His right hand was over the gunwale. He hauled at something, and I leaned over to help. Between us we dragged in the unconscious Monty, weighted almost beyond recovery by a water-logged cork life-belt of the vintage of Noah or earlier.

"Where's the other man?" I shouted.

"Here I am, sir!" And Hill rose head and shoulders over the gunwale on the other side, to be hauled aboard by Fred.

"Now out oars and row like ——!" said I. We had not shipped the rudder. "Keep her head down-wind and try and race the waves!"

We were none of us oarsmen—not even I, who had "followed the sea." On a British merchant-ship in my day the rule was to stick to the ship until nothing had the slightest chance and then make the best of drowning. The boats were for pigs and chickens, and few but the most enthusiastic second mates could swim. But the knowledge that behind us the flames were racing toward a forward hold supposed to be crammed to the beams with high explosives lent us determination, if not skill.

After a while Monty recovered consciousness, coughed up a lot of water and had pluck enough to ship the rudder. We found it easier after that.

We were more than a hundred yards from the ship when I saw flames burst through the forward end of the bridge. Then men began jumping into the sea. Another boat, dangling from a davit by one fall, smashed itself to smithereens, but at last they did get one into the water, full of men as a tin of sardines. I wondered what they were waiting for—we didn't wait, we rowed a race with death—and then I saw the skipper, all disheveled and blackened in the smoke, stand hesitating, either afraid or unwilling to jump. I could not hear, but I could see them shouting to him.

Then he did jump for it, just as the ship lay over to a sea. He fell between the boat and the ship's side. And, as the *Bundesrath* rose again, her great fat flank upheaving with the force of seven thousand tons, he was caught between ship and boat and squeezed into shapelessness. As the boat turned over and tipped its maddened occupants into the sea I saw the upper half of him—head and shoulders —pinched off and fall over among the rest.

"Fingelmann is dead!" I shouted, straining at my oar.

"Row!" yelled Monty, spitting salt water. "Row, or we'll feed the same sharks! 'Row, men! Row!"

They say the expected never happens. The flames leaped over the bridge and swallowed it. The wooden deck on the fo'castle head caught fire, and the wooden foremast became a flaring beacon, whose flames were like a great flag in the wind. But the belly of the ship gave never a rumble—never a warning.

We had rowed a full half-mile—perhaps more—when the upper half of the ship along the whole length of her rose, like a box lid hinged at the stern, and stood on end. Flame leaped out of her belly then—savage, white, dazzling flame that hurt the eyes—and a mess of blackened wreck sprang skyward until I thought it would never cease going up—up—up, all in a heap together.

Then, before it fell, there came a thunderclap, louder than all the sounds I ever heard, and the sea in every direction after that was bombarded by the falling débris—metal and wood, but metal mostly. Where the *Bundesrath* had been was nothing but a pall of smoke that mushroomed, rolled over on itself and fled down-wind.

It was the sound of the explosion that brought the Messageries Maritimes S.S. *Natal* reeling and rolling down on us, flying her French ensign like a pretty lady's ribbon. All four classes—the French believe in providing for every purse—cheered us as we struggled toward them across the ugliest sea it has been my lot to witness. We had only one element in our favor—it was warm, not cold.

It was far too rough for them to lower their companion-ladder, but they swung out a boom long before they reached us and hauled us out one by one in a coaling basket, Monty last, he claiming the privilege. I went up first, for somebody had to break the news to our new hosts.

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"Cholera!" I yelled, as they hauled the basket in along the boom.

So they kept me in the basket fifteen minutes while the ship's doctor made ready to quarantine us. Monty sent up the cholera victims next, and they lived long enough to make sworn statements, which the captain of the *Natal* wrote down and signed. Those statements must exist somewhere, together with the account we others swore to. If copies of them were ever submitted to the Kaiser's Government, the official comments would make good reading.

The thing that we cared about most, as we looked overside at the *Bundesrath's* boat tossing and rolling along on the merciless sea, was that Monty had saved our papers. The guns, tents, clothes, saddles and supplies were gone.

"But where the passports are there's a key to the door of the future," said Monty.

"Passports be ——!" remarked Fred. "Where's the money?"

"The drafts are in the package with the passports in my pocketbook. That's the key I referred to, Fred."

"All the same," said Yerkes, "you'll never get rich enough this way to take up your title and live as you should. Let's go to America next, and hunt up a maid with money!"

Monty laughed.

"Let's try the elephants first in British East. I'll consent to marry pork, or steel, or railways if ivory fails! Let's give the poor woman one last chance! Let's all try British East and ivory!"

The MASK of the IRON FACE

by GORDON YOUNG

Author of "Law and Order," "Evidence," etc.

IT IS a little melodramatic, perhaps, to call this "The Mask of the Iron Face;" but almost alone among the miners and gamblers of the camp, Ward Russell was smooth-shaven. His face was lined and set and hard and dark as iron, unpolished and unrusted. He was a stranger in the camp. This was peculiar, for though most of the men were strangers one to another when they came rushing pell-mell down the valley and stuck huts of muslin and canvas on the hillsides for homes and threw their spades on to the grounds to mark their claims, overnight they became friends, made "pardnerships" and loaned one another dust and tools. But, though he had been among the first to come, a month later Russell was still a "stranger."

Russell was rather slender and a bit bowed at the knees. When he walked, he seemed to stumble along—yet without coming anywhere near to falling—and from the waist up he was stiff and erect. In other words, he had the gait and bearing of a horseman, of a man born into the saddle,

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who for some reason—gold, California gold, had pulled men off saddles and forecastles, out of counting-houses in New England and England—had been transposed to the mountains.

He mined a little, drank a little, gambled a little, but addressed no one of the men and answered in monosyllables when spoken to. He carried neither knife nor gun. But if any one had watched him closely it might have been noticed that at the poker table he always chose a chair that put his back in a corner; that at the bar he always leaned with both elbows behind him, and that his right hand was ever unconsciously resting on his hip. But the men of the camp were not observant.

They were wild over the diggings; they drank in reckless good-fellowship; they gambled with careless abandon. Yet they did remark the hard stern face of Russell—strangely set, immobile as the palm of a Chinaman's hand.

In the early '50's the bulk of the miners were farmers and city-bred men. True; they hardened rapidly into typical miners. Among them, however, were adventurers and bad-men from all parts of the earth; but numerically, the miners were but recently from farms and offices. The absence of social conventions, the laxness of the Law—which often awoke to amend its lapses by an abrupt use of the hemp—the hardness of the life and unrestraint of dissipation exposed the roughness and turbulence of men's characters.

It is doubtful if any one who peers into the life of those vanished camps will insist that such conditions actually made men evil or immoral. What evilness existed was robustly exposed and the sin of sins, hypocrisy, was minimized almost to the point of disappearance. One of the most disagreeable features of the camps was due to the ambition of so many fellows to be known as "bad-men", to make and live up to fearsome reputations. Fellows who in more conventional society would simply have been sports and toughs expanded into bullies and "killers".

There were also many criminals who had already written their records in blood—and it is very much of a misapprehension to believe, as is popularly believed, that a bully, a blusterer, a braggart, is necessarily a coward.

The camp at Webster Fork was rich and a thousand men were working the sand of the broad, dry and shallow beds; general stores and gambling-houses, more or less huddled together, made quite a "business" district. And of course there were women.

> It matters not to what far spot
> The sons of men may go.
> There women come, with cards and rum,
> To share their joy and wo.

As a nameless and humble singer of those days wrote on a wind-blown sheet of wrapping-paper.

ONE afternoon the fortnightly stage rattled down the mountain road through a cloud of brown dust; and, at a powerful jerk and seesaw from the arms of the muscular driver, the horses settled on their haunches and brought the stage to a sudden stop before the story-and-a-half house labeled exuberantly, "Good Luck Hotel." The passengers were pretty well shaken up; but, glad to be at the journey's end, they clambered out. Among them was one who straightway strode inside to the Good Luck bar and introduced himself as "Devil" Johnson—thereby throwing down a gauntlet that no one, just then, picked up.

Two others of the passengers were a man and a girl—and, even in that crowded camp, the Good Luck put at the disposal of Col. Sutherland and his daughter two rooms. But then, the colonel had had the foresight to engage the rooms a month ahead. Col. Sutherland was short, straight, dignified, dressed in broadcloth and despite the heat and travel-weariness retained a certain characteristic neatness.

Eunice Sutherland was taller than her father, brown of face and brown of eyes, and, though there was something of his dignity about her bearing, there was a certain irrepressible merriment in her eyes and her lips were often quickened into smiles. But she was not smiling as she came from the stage. Her face was serious, a little anxious.

Ward Russell, taciturn, motionless, leaned against the front of the hotel—back to the wall—and watched, as many others were watching, the passengers get out. He saw Eunice catch hold of her father's arm and speak earnestly as she glanced back into the stage.

"But my dea'—" the colonel protested.

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"She is sick!" Eunice insisted, with another backward glance.

"But my dea'—" he began again, gently remonstrative.

"Father, what difference does that make? The poor thing is sick," she said, low-voiced and tensely.

And there appeared a woman, fumbling weakly to steady herself and descend from the stage. Her face was pale with illness. She scarcely knew what she was doing. She scarcely cared.

Col. Sutherland had been a little disturbed that for three days his daughter had had to travel in close company with such a woman as this and regretted that Eunice had not been left at home in San Francisco with her mother. Being from the South, he of course had rigid ideas about certain things touching his women folk; but California stages carried those who paid and required no certificates of character.

But nevertheless, though he had felt uncomfortable at the presence of that woman so near his daughter, Col. Sutherland had quietly but convincingly repressed Mr. Johnson into a state of quietude when he had annoyed the sick woman with an attempt at a certain jocular intimacy. She was no fit companion for his daughter, but she was a woman; and to be a woman, no matter what kind, touched the chivalry of Col. Sutherland.

Even then, as she tottered at the stage door, he instinctively stepped back and with a "Permit me to assist yuh" helped her down. Eunice immediately took hold of the other arm and, unconvinced but unresisting, the colonel escorted that woman into the hotel and placed her in the room reserved for his daughter.

Ward Russell had stared at the woman as hard as one might stare at the body of the dead who had burst the funereal shroud and walked unseeingly across one's path. There was no change of expression on his face. His countenance was like an iron mask, in a way a forbidding mask. When she had passed inside, he followed, but turned off to the bar and called for whisky. His voice, usually soft, almost pleasant, was hoarse. He could scarcely articulate. But his hand was steady. His face emotionless.

Mr. Johnson was at the bar and many people were listening to him. He carried two guns. He was a big man and bearded. He had fierce eyes and his voice was emphatic.

"My name is Johnson an' they call me 'Devil' Johnson," he had said.

And he had glowered about—inquiringly—to see if any cared to challenge his right to that formidable name.

Most of the people in the camps in those days were peace-loving. Turbulent, yes; that is, in a noisy, exuberant fashion. But most of them were recently from the East, unused to gun-play and accustomed to having officers of the law do the work pertinent to it. It is not easy to reconcile that fact with the romance of early California, or with authenticated incidents, or yet with the Vigilantes—which is due largely to the emphasis that romance has placed on the more picturesque and thrilling incidents and to the lack of familiarity with Vigilante history.

The Vigilantes were not organized until rascals, bullies and criminals grew insolent and ubiquitous because they were so infrequently apprehended or even challenged. If the majority of citizens had not been preoccupied with gold-digging and trading, and almost apathetically willing to avoid personal encounters, there would never have been such a spread of crime as to call the Vigilantes into existence.

And though Webster Forks had the usual sprinkling—perhaps a little more—of "bad-men," it had not yet organized a company of Vigilantes. Already in some of the older camps Mr. Johnson, had he talked in any such manner, would have been invited to get out. Had he declined the invitation he would have been publicly whipped and, had he persisted in remaining and suited his actions to his words, he would soon have dangled from the end of a rope.

Mr. Johnson had remarked that he never went scouting for trouble. Not much. But let it show its nose and he shot! Was there any one who didn't believe it?

Two guns leaped to his hand in a ready demonstration of what he would do.

But he stowed the guns and invited everybody up for a drink.

At that moment Ward Russell, who, with no more attention than a deaf man might have paid, had stood close to Johnson, was raising the glass to his mouth.

Johnson, glancing right and left to see that all the company was attending him,

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thrust out a restraining hand and it fell on Ward Russell's crooked arm. The glass was shaken from his fingers. It fell and broke.

With a movement swift as the eye could follow, Ward Russell leaped back, snatching at his hip. For the fragment of a second—hardly longer—the mask-like expression vanished and there was thrust into his face such fury as artists put into the faces of fiends. But he was unarmed. The grasping fingers closed again and again and again on nothing but air. Any one could see that had a pistol dangled at his thigh he could—as one observer put it—have shot the devil and reloaded before that fellow had dragged his "hoss"-pistols from their holsters.

But drag them he did—both of them; and their muzzles fell at a level with Russell's heart.

"I'll show you—you ——!" and Johnson cursed. "I'm Devil Johnson an' any man that draws on me dies like a dog."

But a voice had called out that Ward Russell was unarmed. A chorus of protests leaped out. The cry of "Fair play!" has rung in the throats of Anglo-Saxons from the Witenagemots of rude ancestors. It is the instinctive cry of the males of the race. It was reechoed in the bar of the Good Luck. Devil Johnson did not shoot.

"Get out!" he said to Russell, gesturing with a gun.

Russell went. He took his time; moved backward deliberately, slowly. His face was hard, immobile, inscrutable. It seemed a little pale. That was all.

Johnson was explaining that he wouldn't shoot an unarmed man. He do such a thing? Not much. But he was quick on the trigger. He always gave the other fellows a chance to reach first. It did them little good. His name was Devil Johnson. It was likely that anybody with that name would be able to finish whatever he started, wasn't it? Everybody up and have a drink.

As Ward Russell went out of the door a man followed.

"Here," he said, thrusting a gun, handle-forward, toward Russell.

It was the well-meant offer to give Russell a ready chance to call Devil Johnson's bluff.

Russell reached out. In the beginning the gesture was an eagerness to have the gun; then his hand paused in midair, and he finished the gesture with a downward blow that struck the gun to the ground. He strode off. The man's eyes followed in amazement.

WARD RUSSELL went to his tent—a lean-to with a front of heavy muslin and boughs piled on the side for shade and some privacy. California Summers are rainless, the days hot, the nights cool, in mountain regions chill.

He threw himself on his pallet, face down, and buried his head in the crook of his elbow. For a long while he lay almost motionless; then he sat up as a man who has come to a hard-fought decision. His face was changed. Again it was strained with a sort of fiendish intensity. A contemptuous smile twisted the corners of his thin lips.

He reached across to a leather valise and took out a belt, filled with cartridges, and a holster attached. In the holster was a heavy, pearl-handled revolver. His fingers touched it with a certain strange affection.

He stood up, strapped it about him with the holster swinging low and about his knee he tied the two dangling thongs that were attached at the muzzle end of the holster.

Then in a flash—as if drawing for a duel—the gun seemed to leap from the leather to meet his hand. It seemed to leap with muzzle pointing forward at the same time a sinister click sounded on the empty chamber. His trigger-finger was the second finger of his right hand and, spinning the gun on that finger, he cocked the hammer with his thumb while almost simultaneously came the second click. And the gun scarcely stopped its spinning as he cocked and snapped it over and over.

He did not use the trigger at all except as a support. The trigger-spring had been filed away. By releasing the thumb with which he so rapidly pulled back the hammer, he could shoot faster—far faster—than by using even the double-action. Double-actions were a bit slow in those days, anyway, and men who had trained themselves to shoot by the hammer-snapping of single-action revolvers were fast—almost as fast as the modern automatic.

As he played with the gun, there was an uncanny expression of joy, of exultation, on

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his face. The mask had vanished again. Something demoniac was there instead, demoniac and pleased. With marvelous dexterity and swiftness he drew and spun the gun on his finger, snapping it down right and left at imaginary targets.

A small mirror was tied to the pole at the doorway where Russell shaved every morning. He threw the gun on the mirror and snapped—and on that instant seemed turned to stone. Motionless, at the grotesque angle of the killer who watches a victim, deathly wounded, reeling to a fall, Russell stood staring at his own distorted face.

Slowly, very slowly, he straightened up. As one who comes out of a trance he looked down at the gun in his hand and again at the mirror. Then he threw the gun on to the blankets and, unbuckling the belt, let it fall at his feet. But the thongs at the muzzle end of the holster still clung to his knee and nearly tripped him when he, unnoticingly, took a step.

There was something almost symbolic in the tenacious clinging of the holster after he had with a decisive gesture discarded it. Ward Russell was a killer. He knew it—almost hated, and certainly feared, himself for it. He had trained himself to remarkable swiftness and accuracy with a gun and taken pride in it. He had killed his man again and again in fair fight. At least he had thought it fair before he suddenly awakened to the fact that every so often if no quarrel came to hand he would pick one.

Like a man who must have his periodical debauch, Russell found that he had to get into a periodical shooting. Being a man of intelligence and some education, he tried to reason with himself; but the born killer goes to the fray as a drunkard goes to his bottle, and the fearsome idea came to Russell that he, as many killers have been, was unbalanced, mad. Gunmen are jealous of their rivals as prima donnas are of theirs and Russell was challenged at times when he would not have sought a fight. So no matter what his intentions were he had to keep in practise and go armed.

He became even more taciturn, more quick to draw and shoot, and at the same time the idea that he was verging on to madness obsessed him, often terrified him. He grew reckless. Troubles came fast. After some hard shooting and hard riding he got away—carrying with him the decision that he would go to California, where he was unknown. There the name of Ward Russell meant nothing. He would go about unarmed. He would break away from that madness that had forced him into outlawry. Perhaps he could find gold and go East and become a substantial citizen, his past forgotten, unknowable.

Always he was on guard against himself. The tension perpetually disclosed on his face was nothing but the strain—the restraint—going on within him. He avoided men; made no friendships; let everybody alone. And he had kept out of trouble. He might have kept out of it indefinitely had not Devil Johnson knocked from his hand the glass of whisky he was carrying to his lips to steady nerves shocked by the sight of Anne Gresham, pale, sick, being helped from the stage-coach.

But when he had seen unexpectedly the madness on his face, Russell flung the revolver aside. To shoot another man would probably be to start all over—yet what did it matter? The only cure for a killer is to meet a better man than himself, a quicker, surer man. And of course that can scarcely help being attended by death. Ward Russell had no fear of death, no thought of it. His one fear was the madness that came when his lean fingers closed on the butt of a revolver.

II

THE next morning three people stood by the bed of Anne Gresham. She lay quietly in that sleep that is so near to death that even the sensitive touch of the physician can not detect the pulse-beat. Dr. Wilson had just wiped the trace of moisture from the small pocket-mirror and by that he knew that she was not yet dead.

Col. Sutherland stood by the foot of the bed looking down at the face whitened with pallor, a face thin and drawn, almost translucent. The faces of the dead, of those near death, are always restful, cleansed, as if the sins registered there from day to day had been erased, as the blackest ink may be erased from parchment.

"Yuh think, suh, theah is no hope?" Col. Sutherland asked quietly.

The colonel was a small man. At the first glance he seemed almost ridiculously

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small, especially for one so dignified. But the first impression was not likely to remain if one looked carefully a second time—particularly if one looked closely at his face. His hair was rather long and just touched with gray. He wore a short beard and there was no gray in it. It was black. His nose was thin and long and slightly humped.

He was well known in San Francisco. He had been there since the Summer of '49. There, no one thought of his diminutive size. To various people his name meant various things—none of them incongruous with high honor. He was generous, he was brave, he was irreproachably polite. Underneath his long black coat he carried a gun—and that gun commanded respect among even desperate characters.

"She is as good as dead," said the doctor.

Eunice Sutherland, with a tear-dampened handkerchief pressed against her cheek, also stood by the bed. Something of the eternal sisterhood of women seemed to have made her, daughter of Col. Sutherland, sympathetically akin to Anne Gresham.

"Eunice, I think yuh had bettah retire, deah."

She shook her head. To her there seemed something grossly cold about allowing one to die, alone, and even more so about allowing a woman to die with only men near.

The woman stirred, raising a feeble hand as if in a restless dream, and her lips moved.

"The best thing she can do is die," said the doctor, speaking almost sympathetically, as one who is wise in the ways of the world—and of death.

"Oh, don't say that!" Eunice protested, with a slight shudder. "She is young—and maybe she hadn't yet quit dreaming of being happy—some day."

"They quit such dreams early, Miss Sutherland."

Col. Sutherland took the doctor by the arm and led him from the room. Perhaps he, father and Southerner too, was uncomfortable to have his daughter edging into a conversation of such import.

Alone with Anne Gresham, Eunice, as if to defeat the doctor's judgment, drew up a chair and, taking a towel on which he had sprinkled whisky, began to rub the woman's forehead and face.

Presently the woman moved again. Her eyes opened and she stared dully, unseeingly at Eunice and mumbled a name. Words followed slowly, laboriously. Eunice wished her father and the doctor were there, but she couldn't go for them. The woman's words held her. There was no story, no coherent, rounded, filled-in tale; there was scarcely more than a name and a woman's love, injury done—and forgiven.

When the woman was again silent, Eunice flew to find her father.

III

A MAN of Col. Sutherland's prominence and reputation could not have appeared in any mining-camp without being recognized and talked about. Particularly as his had been a part of some importance in the Vigilantes—that daring band of stern men that had arisen in defiance of civil and military law to uphold decency and justice.

When Devil Johnson learned that he had traveled for three days in the same coach with that —— colonel, he was loud and emphatic in his regrets that he had not long ago shot the aforesaid——one. He promised his new friends among the rougher, tougher element of the camp to do so promptly.

When Ward Russell heard who that little man was, he nervously jumped to the conclusion that Col. Sutherland was looking for him. He had seen the colonel help Anne Gresham from the stage and knew that the colonel had taken her to rooms previously engaged. He had seen, but not heard, what passed at the stage door. It may or may not have occurred to him that it was odd the colonel was also accompanied by his daughter if he had come on a man-hunt.

Ward Russell knew that Anne Gresham had cause to hate him. He knew that there were many men who would spend money and travel far to find him. Col. Sutherland might be one of these; there was no telling, for instance, what friendship the colonel might have had for some man Russell had killed. In those days it was not unusual for the living to take up the dead friend's quarrel. And Russell was sure that Col. Sutherland and Anne Gresham traveled together, the one to identify him, the other—well Russell felt there was nothing left to do but fight it out. He was not the sort of man to run.

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So he buckled on his gun the next morning and went to the Good Luck bar. But his thoughts were less of Col. Sutherland than of Anne Gresham, less of what might happen to him than of what he owed to her. Ward Russell was a man not without conscience. His anguish at being a killer served somewhat to show that. He was a hard man, a bad man, fearsomely impulsive—quick in temper as in generosity. He was, as most men are to a great or little extent, beset by two personalities.

It is customary to speak of a man as if he were "good" or "bad" without any regard for the conflict in his nature, for the shadings and interpenetration of diverse characteristics. All men have done shameful things; sometimes memory of these urge them to a regeneration. Other times the same memories fill them with a kind of futile despair and recklessly, madly, they cut loose from restraint.

Ward Russell was in a way bitterly determined not to regret the injury he had done to Anne Gresham—for it had been a shameful thing. No redeeming word may be said of it for him excepting this: he was more or less drunk at the time and under great stress in the belief that he was a confirmed killer. Something tigerish in him seemed to have become permanently unleashed.

Anne Gresham loved him. He knew that. He cared for her. She was "his woman". Anne was tender-hearted, easily thrilled, easily hurt, easily made happy. Strangely enough in a woman of her kind, she was not proud of him for his reputation as a gunman, but she seemed always appealing to that side of his character that he had discarded. He was not without education. In his younger days he had known certain refinements. She asked him not to drink; she begged him not to shoot; she pled with him to take her and go away where both of them could be honest and happy.

And he—well, one night in the crowded dance-hall of a Southern frontier town he had shot a man. Russell, half-drunk, with red floating before his eyes, had forced a quarrel with a young fellow, made him draw and then, mockingly swift with his own gun, had shot. Before the crowd, fearful of his aim and swiftness, Anne had indignantly accused him of deliberate murder. She had upbraided him as a woman only dares upbraid the man she loves.

And Russell—half-drunk, furious because in his own conscience he knew that she spoke true—had drawn his gun. He used only one. He was a right-handed killer. And he held that crowded hall at bay while he talked—and most of what he said was lies. But to overwhelm her, he had said that it was he who had recently robbed the coach and shot the driver to get expressed gold—because she had urged him to! He went further and said he had shot this man because he knew she—his woman—loved the fellow and that that was why she now stormed at him.

Then he had turned, leaped to his horse, shot the first man that followed in pursuit from the doorway and rode off. But ride as he would and go where he could, there was no escape from the memory of how he had treated her.

When he saw her leaning on the shoulder of Col. Sutherland as she walked from the coach, he thought she had come tracking him to have her revenge. He wished that he could make peace with her—not because he was afraid to die, but because he was ashamed. And yet, as every man knows, the deeper the shame the more stubborn one usually becomes in not admitting it, in refusing to make a decent restitution—lest it be taken for cowardice or something of the kind.

All morning Ward Russell waited in the bar of the Good Luck, his back to the wall. Silently, grimly he waited. Now and then he drank a glass of whisky. He would not run away. He would await whatever was coming—and he would fight. His face was hard as ever, harder if that could have been possible. Every muscle was strained taut. His nerves were stretched to the snapping-point. His fingers restlessly played at the edge of the belt that sagged on his right hip.

Shortly before noon Devil Johnson came swaggering in. At his heels were three or four fellows who had attached themselves to him; perhaps because they felt he would lead them to fortune; perhaps because they wished to be associated with one who had such a reputation as Johnson claimed for himself. Anyway it looked as if he would shortly demonstrate. He made no secret of the fact that he would shoot Col. Sutherland on sight. It seemed that Johnson had a grudge against the Vigilantes of San Francisco.

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One might gather that they had given too close attention to some two or three of Johnson's friends. Ward Russell eyed the fellow and listened. Russell was a judge of men. He knew Johnson would try to make good his threat because he had gone too far to dare back out. The old, old fever to throw a gun on the fellow himself heated his blood. Most men find the desire to call bullies to account almost irresistible —that is, most fighting men do. But Russell remained silent, motionless. He waited.

Col. Sutherland came in with Dr. Wilson at his heels. Eunice had told them what the woman, half-unconscious, had said. The name she had mentioned had been that of Ward Russell. The doctor had said that Russell was in the camp; and Col. Sutherland had said that of course the man must be found and taken to the woman. She wanted him.

AS THEY came in, a hand plucked at Devil Johnson's arm; a voice whispered in his ear and he wheeled. A big man, he was, bushy of face and broad of shoulders. He drew both guns and men fell away from his sides.

Johnson roared at Col. Sutherland. He called him many things and said he was about to shoot. He mentioned the name of a man hanged by the Vigilantes.

Col. Sutherland did not show surprize. Very erect he stood and his dark eyes peered steadily from under his broad black hat. For a time he made no motion except to slightly push back his long coat as he placed his thumbs in the lower pockets of his vest. He seemed unarmed. He did not speak. He looked Devil Johnson over from bushy face to dusty, heavy boots. Then Col. Sutherland walked straight up to the burly man who held a revolver in either hand and he stopped within an arm's reach of Johnson. He said quietly but ominously:

"Yuh put up those hoss-pistols, suh. The'ah is a lady ill in this hotel an' I don't want to annoy her by gun-fiah to shoot a houn' like yuh, suh!"

Tense moments followed. It was one thing to boast of shooting the colonel. It was another and entirely different thing to look the colonel between the eyes and do it. Perhaps, since he seemed to know so much of what had gone on in San Francisco, Johnson had heard and was at the moment impressed by the story that in a formal duel with a certain well-known character the colonel had not even reached for his gun until the fatal handkerchief fluttered toward the ground—then had shot first and squarely through the heart.

Perhaps it was that he, too, did not wish to annoy the sick woman by gun-fire! Anyway the guns wavered slightly. Devil Johnson glanced down first to the right and put away a gun on that side, then to the left and replaced the other.

"Colonel," he said loudly, trying to snatch victory from disgrace, "I ain't got the heart to shoot an unarmed man!"

Some one of the toughs who had but a moment before been as Johnson's shadow, laughed hoarsely, mockingly. Devil Johnson's mouth-made reputation was gone, vanished like a pricked bubble.

Col. Sutherland turned again toward Dr. Wilson.

"There," said the doctor, pointing toward the wall where Ward Russell sat, "is the man."

As the colonel started forward, Ward Russell stood up. Instinctively he stepped back, putting his shoulders almost against the wall. The movement was significant for any one who noticed. Few in the room did. Col. Sutherland, however, was very observant at all times. His right hand slipped low down. The thumb rested, not in the pocket of his vest, but in the pocket of his trousers.

Five paces from Ward Russell the colonel paused—

"Mistah Russell, suh?"

"Yes."

"Will yuh come outside with me, suh. I wish——"

The barroom was suddenly filled with roar of guns. Men all over the place discreetly fell below tables. Devil Johnson with one bound cleared the bar and huddled on the floor behind it. When the smoke lifted but two men were erect on their feet: Ward Russell and Col. Sutherland. The colonel was calmly replacing his revolver in the holster beneath his long black coat, and Ward Russell stared down at the shattered wrist of his right hand. His gun lay on the floor. He, the swiftest killer of the Southwest frontier, had reached first only to have his wrist splintered as the muzzle cleared the holster.

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"I wish," the colonel resumed exactly where he had been interrupted, "to conduct yuh, suh, to a lady that has come a consideahble distance to see yuh."

Ward Russell slowly, grimly, turned his eyes from the bleeding wrist to the colonel's sternly impassive face; then looked down —unbelievingly—at the hand that drooped helplessly before him.

"Yuh seem to have had the mistaken ideah, suh," the colonel went on with quiet dignity, "that I am conce'ned with some affaiahs in youah past. I am not, suh. Youah name was unknown to me until some few moments ago."

Russell again looked hard into the colonel's face.

"I am wanted—back there."

He said it slowly, firmly. The game was up. His gun-hand was gone. He was ready to face the hemp. The manhood that was deep down within came to the surface, as it so often came to the surface those days in ruffians who had played a desperate game and died with surprizing dignity—even commending the justice that hanged them.

"Suh, many of ouah finest citizens a'ah men that have made mistakes—back theah!"

With a slight gesture over his shoulder the colonel symbolically indicated the populous region beyond the desert and wilderness strip across which the Argonauts swarmed.

Ward Russell stepped forward and withos another word walked from the room with Col. Sutherland. Those who had seen and heard followed them wonderingly with their eyes then each man turned to the next inquiringly. But there was none who could explain it—possibly excepting the doctor and he had also left the barroom.

IV

AN HOUR or so later Eunice, the colonel and the doctor sat silently together and frequently turned their eyes toward the door that opened into the next room.

The roar of the guns had aroused Anne Gresham into a sort of terrified consciousness. In her more than half-delirious state it meant but one thing to her: Russell was killing somebody. And it had not seemed surprizing to her when he walked in, followed by the colonel.

"Ward, Ward! Why did you do that again!" she cried out.

Eunice had caught her shoulders to keep her from leaping from the bed toward him.

Ward raised his arm with the shattered wrist extended.

"I'll never throw another gun——"

He said it soberly, slowly, as if something impossible had happened—something painfully miraculous.

"You're hurt! Ward! Oh God!"

Then, deliriously jumping from idea to idea, feverish, broken sentences told of how she had had to come to him, of how she had followed and searched, of how she dreaded that he would be angry.

He had sat down on the edge of the bed, He had put his left arm around her tenderly and, forgetful of the presence of others, had said—

"Anne, I—we—we can start over now——"

And, as he raised the broken wrist to illustrate fully what he meant, the others, as if called by a gesture, with one accord tiptoed from the room.

"Doctor," said Eunice, an hour or so later, whispering low, anxiously, hopefully, "she won't—I mean she will be better now?"

The doctor cleared his throat nervously two or three times, but he said nothing. He shook his head doubtfully. He got up and tiptoed to the door and bent listeningly. No sound. Softly he opened the door, and Eunice slipped forward.

Anne Gresham lay back on her pillow; her eyes were wide-open, glazed. Death had come. Russell was crouched at the side of her bed. His head was drooped and the face, the hard, iron-set face, was stained with tears.

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The ACCURSED TOWN

by AGNES and EGERTON CASTLE

CHAPTER I

Arcades Ambo

ON THE third *Vendémiaire*, year two of the republic "one and indivisible," according to the new style — or, according to the old, now sternly proscribed, in the early Fall of 1793—two men were approaching each other from opposite directions along the desolate road that crests the Vimy Ridge between Lens and Arras. Two men, most singular personages both, apparently the only living creatures at the sundown hour, for miles around in that sinister waste.

The man coming from the north, gray, lean of face and limb, very tall, but losing much of his height by a pronounced stoop, natural or assumed—probably the latter, for both countenance and frame bore every evidence of vigor—was leisurely pushing a knife-grinder's barrow. This was a very complete affair, with large wheel and small, water-bucket and tool-box and a painted board proclaiming, in red upon dirty gray, the craft as well as the convictions of the owner. Under a Roman *fasces* surmounted by the cap of liberty—distinctly the work of an amateur—the lettering, a trifle uncertain in outline as well as spelling, warned all who chose to read that Horatius Coclès not only sharpened knives, razors and scissors, but also put an edge to axes, shears and reapers and all tools of workers on the soil. The whole was emphasized by the motto: "Liberty or Death."

The knife-grinder wore the loose trousers, the sloppy carmagnole, the red cotton cap, the wooden shoes stuffed with wool, of the unimpeachable *sans-culotte*. A fortnight's beard all but obliterated the lines of a face which, decently shorn, might for aught one could guess have been handsomely human, but which, under the stiff gray stubble, evoked before anything else thoughts of the were-wolf. On the left side of the truculent head lids, closed and sunken in the socket, betrayed the absence of one eye.

Horatius Coclès, in truth, was not a figure any solitary wayfarer would have cared to meet at dusk "at the corner of a wood"—as the French catch-phrase meaningly has it. He plodded along, however, in his wool-packed *sabots*, whistling, through the gap of a missing front tooth, a fanciful little tune of olden days with all the air of careless resignation.

He was nearing the southern shoulder of the long ridge where the hitherto perfectly straight road split in two branches declining toward the plain. The flaming sun was drawing close to the horizon; its level rays made of the river Scarpe a blood-red stream, shining here and there between fringes of vapor as it wound its slow course from Arras. Yonder, away to the left, the spires and high-pointed roofs of the old town, its towers and bastions, rose as a purple silhouette against the darkening eastward sky.

At the parting of the ways he halted and sat down on the shaft of his barrow; he

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had caught sight of the other man in the solitude. With the ceasing of the wooden shoes' clatter on the stones, of the creaking wheels, of the rattling pans and his shrill-whistled ditty, a dead silence was about him—broken only by the caw of some belated crow. Even on the height there was no murmur of wind. In the stillness he watched the newcomer who was taking the slope on the grassy side-path at a round pace.

This was a man of middle height, with the puzzling outline of one who had once been fat, who should be comfortably rotund, but who had remained merely squat; with a face which for congruity should have been rosy and smooth, but which was furrowed and sallow within a frame of ferocious red whiskers. His clothes, though distinctly free from the suspicion of any aristocratic bias toward neatness, were those of the small *bourgeois* class. His headgear was the foxskin cap *à là Jean-Jacques*—"patriotic" emblem—with the tail dangling, cue-fashion, on the nape of the neck. From his wrist swung by a loop of leather a knotty stick of the kind known to the true Jacobin as *pouvoir exécutif*.

As he drew abreast of the seated figure, he gave a hurried look sidelong; then, with a flourish of his stick by way of greeting:

"Salute and fraternity, gossip! It's getting late," he grunted and would have passed on, had not the other called back in a voice of similar huskiness:

"*Eh, là*—what the devil, not so fast, citizen! I want to know my road."

"As for that, gossip," said the wayfarer, stopping and facing 'round, "that depends. Where art thou for?"

"Arras."

"Arras? Bad place! Nothing doing at Arras. Little to be got there. But, if thou must go to Arras, it's the middle road—and a good league or more."

"Bah! Arras a bad place? Now why? There must be blunt knives in the worst of towns—surely."

The knife-grinder wrinkled his forehead up under the red cap, scratching reflectively, as he spoke, the brow of his serviceable eye with the nail of his middle finger. The man in the fox-cap remained, open-mouthed upon an unspoken retort, staring in profound astonishment. After a while he slowly drew nearer, bent over the board and aloud read the inscription:

Horatius Coclès, repasseur
Aiguise les couteaux, rasoirs et ciseaux

"Horatius Coclès," he repeated. He looked keenly at the bearer of that appropriate name; then, he suddenly yielded himself to a burst of gentle laughter.

The upward wrinkle of the one-eyed man changed to a frown that eloquently testified to a temper none of the most enduring. He rose angrily to his feet:

"Come, come, citizen—" he began at his growliest, but checked himself.

The newcomer was eyeing him up and down with a smiling quizzical expression that was suspicious—at any rate, puzzling. And presently a new voice, smooth and fluent, fell upon his ear—

"Upon my word," he of the fox cap was saying, "M. le Marquis plays the part to admiration!"

The frown on the knife-grinder's face deepened to a threatening furrow. He reached for a bludgeon that hung among the paraphernalia of the barrow, balanced it knowingly in his hand and took a step back with every air of one ready for a fight—and not inexpert at it.

"Ho—ho! Laying traps for a good patriot, is it? Pass along, and quicker than that, my joker, or——"

And, so saying, he advanced menacingly.

BUT again he checked himself. The squat man had taken a respectful pace sideways, doffed his cap, thereby revealing a perfectly bald head, joined his heels and, with a bow that even under the ungainly clothes showed the best style of the *ci-devant* régime, was saying:

"In the name of Heaven, let M. le Marquis hold his hand! M. le Marquis always did wield the stick with sound effect, I know—but that was the gold-headed cane of the good days, the malacca that broke no bones. Whereas, that knobby branch of holly—*miséricorde!*"

He was looking up with an ingratiating smile. The redcap slowly lowered his threatening arm, at the same time straightening himself to his full length, and discarding with his stoop the raucous, dull odiousness of plebeian voice and words.

"So—it is you, M. Duméril," he said quietly.

"Duméril—yes, *monseigneur*—at least for these few minutes, and once more your servant most devoted."

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"*Parbleu*, my friend, this is, take it all in all, rather a surprizing encounter."

"More surprizing to me, in verity, than it can be even for *monseigneur*."

"Indeed? Let us hear."

He sat down once more upon his shaft, but in a strangely new mood. Crossing his wooden-shod feet in the same languid way as if they were clad in silk and fine leather, he drew from the pocket of the carmagnole a snuff-box. True, this was but a birch-bark *tabatière*, valued at the democratic price of six sous, filled with rank stuff. But he tapped the leather-thonged lid and, between black-nailed fingers, raised a pinch to his nostrils with as complacent an air as if the box were still some diamond-studded princely gift, and the snuff his whilom favorite pulvilio-scented Macabaw.

"Why more surprizing for you?" he asked carelessly. "But put on your cap, my excellent Duméril; the evening air is fresh," he added with condescension.

The other obeyed, retaining, however, his deferential attitude.

"Because," he said, "among other things, *monseigneur*, I had heard that the body of M. le Marquis de Pontivry had been found in the Forest of Compiègne half-devoured by the wolves, and, therefore, that there was unfortunately an end of him—whereas——"

"Whereas you now meet him alive, hearty enough, if not in brilliant circumstances nor altogether whole. Well, that the rotting carcass of that impudent poacher Leroux should so successfully have passed for that of his former *seigneur* is but a fitting counterpart to the transmogrification of the said former *seigneur* into the dirty-fisted son of the people——"

He looked for a moment with grim humor at his soiled, callous hands; then he resumed his nonchalant air.

"I will recount the episode, lost eye and all, if there is time. Tell me you, first, how you discovered—no one as yet has questioned the metamorphosis—a question, mark you, which, sure as fate, would be answered on the guillotine—I make the parenthesis, my good Duméril, merely to explain the lack of sympathy with which I met your first advance. I did not know you. How did you know me? The dressing up—anything amiss? And the slouch—ah, and the brandy voice, the gutter voice, the right patriot voice?"

Here M. le Marquis lapsed back for a few hideous seconds into his new life rôle; gave a kind of hyena laugh:

"*Ohé, ohé, ohé—l'aristo! À la lanterne, l'aristo!*"

Then, with startling suddenness, resumed his negligent pose, his clipping enunciation:

"Is it well done? Can one see through it? Through the stoop, through the wild-beast beard? Is it not pure, as they say?"

"Purest *canaille!*"

Fox-cap said this with genuine admiration; the marquis sent him an angry gleam of the solitary eye which, however, almost instantly merged into a self-satisfied smile.

"You always had the right word, Duméril. This is even flattering! But, still, there must be some chink in my armor, since you found it out."

"Let Monseigneur be reassured, it was one which nobody but myself—and that is safe enough—would notice. I have not waited on M. le Marquis' privacy for thirty years—aye, and had the honor of consulting with him about his schemes of pleasure——"

"Yes, *Dumerilius, arbiter elegantiarum*, in the days of pleasure," put in the knife-grinder, pulling at his hairy chin.

"His schemes and his occasional difficulties," pursued the quondam confidential valet, bowing his thanks for the acknowledgment of his worth, "without noticing a peculiar trick of the hand which Monseigneur had when things vexed him, or puzzled him—a flicking of his eyebrow with the median finger, upward: so."

The man mimicked the action, wrinkling his forehead and pursing his mouth, with an effect that was of the drollest on a face so singularly unlike that of the original. M. le Marquis was good enough to laugh heartily.

"I understand," he said. "If that is the only key to my identity, I am safe. And so are you, I should say, for, upon my faith, I never recognized you. You had more hair on your cranium and less about the chops, in our days. No, I never recognized you till you made your well-known bow—a most refreshing sight for my remaining eye. And, by the way, my good friend, that was what saved you; for my second thought—and second thoughts are best—was to suppress, without delay, a man who could see in the owner of my barrow anything else but a hard-working knife-grinder. You little guessed how near

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you were to your end. The most elementary prudence demanded it. Yes, I am thankful that you bowed."

"*Monseigneur* was always kind—but not always so prudent!"

"Times are changed, M. Duméril. We hardly need to look at each other's get-up to be convinced of that. We have now to shift for ourselves for bare existence. But that reminds me: I am detaining you, I fear. You appeared to be in something of a hurry, on intents of your own. Fare you well, Duméril. This has been an agreeable meeting."

CHAPTER II

DUMERIL'S IDEA

THE marquis of the red cap rose to his feet, nodded affably and took up once more the handles of his machine. The man in the fox-cap hesitated.

"If *monseigneur* would permit," he said, "it is such a satisfaction to be allowed, after these many months, to speak real French—I mean French of decent life. The place is deserted—" he cast a look around the lonely, darkening world—"no one, but perhaps a crow or so, to see or overhear—if *monseigneur* would permit, I might attend him a little while on his way—and relieve him of his burden for a league or so. As it is, I shall have to walk all night; it will make but small difference, so long as I do get away from that accursed town."

"Please yourself, Duméril."

The marquis condescendingly surrendered the shafts and, putting on his stoop and his slouch, resumed his march toward Arras.

"Might I have," said the old servant, "the privilege to hear something of *monseigneur's* life since I lost sight of him, as I feared forever, on the night——"

"When my Château de Pontivry, after being so thoroughly sacked, began to blaze? Why, certainly. That I managed to escape in time, by the way, I believe I owe entirely to your alertness, your inventiveness. I have not forgotten it. Indeed, I have wondered with interest how you yourself ultimately fared on that occasion. A trifle better than I, all things considered, I rejoice to perceive," added the *grand seigneur*-tramp, glancing significantly at his companion's *bourgeois* attire.

"Oh, I have seen rough moments, too. But I had not been for so long the purveyor of new ideas to gratify *monseigneur's* taste for novelty and stirring adventure without having some left for my own use. Only, then it was not for pleasure. Ah, no! They made for safety and for a new start in life. And I succeeded. All, in fact, would be going smoothly for me, now—but for that sanguinary maniac over there."

His hands being engaged, Duméril jerked his head in the direction of distant Arras.

"Indeed? Who is that?"

"Has *monseigneur* not heard of Joseph Lebon, the people's representative? Oh—the pure of the pure! He can be trusted, wherever he moves, not to leave an aristocrat's head on its own shoulders within twelve leagues around. Aristocrats? Why, these six months there has not been an aristocrat alive in Flanders or Picardy. Not a priest, not even a man of property. But Lebon must still have his weekly toll of heads—with the man it is a frenzy. The prisons are as full as ever to this day—but full of what?

"Why, *bourgeois*, farmers, working people even—any one who has anything some one else wants. Any one whom some one else has a grudge against. Any one who is heard to name God, inadvertently. Any one who neglects to howl with the wolves, to sing the praise of the pure patriot Lebon, or his wildcat of a wife—the best purveyor of Saint Guillotine. One denunciation is enough; the rest follows as a matter of course.

"Now Aristide Lebidoux—that is Constant Duméril in his new skin, *monseigneur* will be pleased to remember if I should ever have the felicity of coming across him again—Aristide Lebidoux, in the wine business, noted for pure civisme—no better *sans-culotte* ever turned a popular spigot—well, I received a friendly hint, an hour ago, that the Citoyenne Lebon opined that I was suspect. That she had her eye on me. Why? I don't know. I rather incline to think that I may have talked of Chambertin and Romanee in the tone of one who once had an acquaintance with vintages. M. le Marquis' Chambertin was, in verity, to my taste, once!

"I did not wait to pack. Just the time to stuff my money in my pocket and away! The air of Arras is too unwholesome when Lebon— But, here am I, talking about

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myself, while what I am grilling to hear is—what about M. le Marquis? M. le Marquis, I opine, has met with many new emotions, though not of my providing."

"You are in the right, Duméril. You who knew my tastes almost, I will pay you the compliment, better than I did myself—for, though you led me sometimes on dangerously thin ice, I do not remember your ever failing to satisfy the craving for novelty—you will not be surprized to hear that, taking all in all, I have found them—satisfying.

The tune of the old existence—wealth, and one's own way in all things—was played to the last note, wearisome. The new one has at least refreshing variety. It keeps up appetite and expectation. Even with your helpful vigilance at my side, I had almost lost both. If anything like order and repose ever comes back to this France of ours, and I live to see it, I should have a hoard of queer memories, lurid and comic, to relieve the returned tedium. Even up to now only, my 'Odyssey' would take days to recount. I have no objection, however, if it relieves the labor of barrow-trundling, to tell you of its main stages.

"The first night passed over me in my woods of Pontivry, up in the forking of the master branches of the mightiest beech I could find. The wolves, you know. It was interesting for a while to watch upon the clouds the reflection of the bonfire they were making away south, of my ancestors' mansion. But I soon fell asleep—and a sounder nap I rarely tasted. That was a set-off against the disaster."

The ex-servant cast a sidelong admiring glance at his master.

"*Monseigneur* was always a philosopher."

"Epicurean or stoic, according to the hour, that is the true philosophy of life," said redcap, complacently. "No heirs of my body, only collaterals in any case; the mansion might go to the devil. It did, in fact. Then, in the next thirty-six hours I gained the remarkable experience of hunger, not mere appetite, but brutish hunger. The problem, which was becoming almost too acutely interesting both in the present and the immediate future, was solved by the luckiest of meetings. I had just clambered down from my airy bedroom—rather light-headed from inanition and sore of limb in a manner I had never tasted before, when, turning 'round, I found myself face to face with Leroux."

"Ah—yes, Leroux. Now I understand," commented fox-cap.

"THERE was not much light of day yet, underwood, but he knew me at once. And I remembered him. The brigand, he laughed even as you did not so long ago. And, oddly enough, his first words were the same as yours, Maître Duméril. 'Upon my word, M. le Marquis—' he began. But there was that in his ferret's eye that showed that there must be no balancing on my side. I had him by surprize—snatched at his gun. A barrelful of buckshot in his face—he was after my deer. *Et voilà*—his own mother would not have recognized him. That, by the way, gave me the idea.

"In ten minutes I was in his clothes—warm from his body—ugh! But nevertheless a sensation—and he in mine. Eh, he was droll enough, in silk stockings and broidered coat. But the wig on his cropped head was the best of all! I left him the watches, but kept his provender-bag. Bread and cheese and onions—by the nearest springside the best meal of my whole life. Yes, a red letter date! I have never known want of appetite since."

"In truth," murmured Duméril, "that want of appetite in *monseigneur*—the despair of the *chef de cuisine de monseigneur*, a great artist! Poor Aubertin!"

"Gone with the rest of them, I take it?" said the marquis, unemotionally; then went on, with some relish. "For ten days I lived by poaching first my own woods and then that of Compiègne, with Leroux's gun. The life of a red Indian. The veriest Choctaw. Interesting! But, in time, the powder failed—also the novelty. I am sure you can not think what a yearning for salt means. By that time, moreover, I thought myself unrecognizable; a fair specimen of the people's misery. Was not that the catch-phrase: *la misère du peuple?*"

The ex-marquis straightened his red-capped head; gave a mirthless laugh as, with his bludgeon, he tapped his clogs, much in the same flippant style as if it had been the nicely conducted clouded cane.

"The people," sneered Duméril, "ought to be happy, under the Rights of Man—oh, yes, *les Droits de l'Homme*, as administered by their Lebons, their Robespierres!"

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"You remember," went on the marquis, "Thiébaut, at Compiègne? Of course you must; I once charged you with some delicate business concerning the rascal—which you conducted quite to my satisfaction."

At the mention of the name, Duméril had given a little start of surprize.

"Thiébaut—the postmaster?" he said, after a slight pause. "Thiébaut, whose son was saved from the galleys by *monseigneur's* influence. Thiébaut, whose fortune was made through *monseigneur's* protection?" Then he gave a cryptic little laugh, "Eh, eh, eh!"

"I have never done any one else, that I can remember, a good turn in my life," said the marquis pensively.

"Oh, *monseigneur!* What of me, for one instance?"

"The good turns you found in my service were, let us be frank, done by yourself. But you, you found means, on the last day of that service, to think of one for me. Notable exception to the run of human nature! As to this Thiébaut, I did not expect romantic gratitude, of course—that is not in my chords—but can you conceive me, Marquis de Pontivry, epicurean philosopher as aforesaid, who had tested the world in all its faces, in all its cranies, me, capable of believing that the man would at least not help to rend his benefactor?"

"Eh, eh, eh!" said Duméril, but vouchsafed nothing more explicit.

"You are right. Quite right. You were always a sure judge of men. Well, well, I looked him up, in his own stable, where I had marked him entering alone, one evening. Made myself known to the toad. I should have guessed, by his grin as he raised the lantern to look at me, the rank mistake I had made. I was thinking of the frontier then. The ignoble beast's paw had me by the collar—by the collar, *palsambleu!* That was a new sensation. One that had never come my way in any of the riskiest adventures devised by your fertile genius. And so was the fight that ensued on the spot—in the dark.

"I had never looked upon a duel as a fight—merely as a tiresome social performance. But here was the struggle of the original dumb beast that lies somewhere within every human skin—vastly interesting to think back on: the light of nature revealing hitherto undreamed resources for mutual destruction! *Unguibus et rostro!* He bit and kicked and clawed. I throttled. He had one of my eyes, but I had the last of his breath."

"There may be some reason to doubt that," said Duméril. "But what of it? *Monseigneur* escaped, the only thing that matters."

"I WALKED the road all that night," went on the marquis, "and was found, unconscious, in a ditch by a *curé*—one of those new, constitutional *assermentés*, whatever they call the renegades. But he proved the good Samaritan. He took me in; had even a surgeon to attend to my gaping eye; kept me a whole month, or more. I believe he had his private guesses—I had not yet, you see, obtained that full command, which you flatteringly commended, of the patriot voice. But he never owned to them. It was he who set me up in the new life. He sank my capital, the few coins I had left, in a grinder's barrow. The name, too, was of his own suggestion.

"In due time he showed me the road—with his blessing. The blessing of an *assermenté*, conceive that, Duméril! But I have lived on it, and his grindstone, ever since. Not a bad life, as times go. Not a bad life. And—this will appeal to you, my quondam purveyor of new sensations—I have tasted two feelings which thirty years search for novelties in the way of emotion had left unknown: one is gratitude. Yes; believe it, if you can. When I think of that so-called *curé*, there sometimes comes a kind of softness under my left rib—*palsambleu*, that is the fact! I!"

This was followed by a little laugh; very short, but with a tender note so oddly at variance with what the valet had ever known of his master that he turned his head sharply to peer at him through the dusk.

"Well, *monseigneur*," he said, at last, "and the other?"

"The other what? Ah, yes, the other new feeling. I was wandering. The other, my friend, is vengefulness. That, like my weakness for thinking back on the *curé*, must betoken incipient senility. Fancy Gontran de Pontivry, the cynic, who never had deemed man or woman worth a moment's resentment, feeling a vengeful-

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ness about a Thiébaut. Incredible! But it is there. Every time the cold wind, or the scorching sun, makes that empty socket of mine ache—and, that is the one serious drawback in the new order of things, it aches like ten thousand legions of red-hot devils—I find my fingers tingling with the remembrance of the way I wrung the vermin's neck."

"Eh, eh, eh."

The marquis halted in the middle of the road, and, dutifully, the ex-valet halted likewise.

"This is the third time, M. Duméril, that you have made that kind of remark. In the old days, I recollect, that sound, like the breaking of twigs, used to betoken that you were struck by an idea for my service."

"*Monseigneur* is perfectly right. I am maturing an idea—an idea in the style of the old days. M. le Marquis is pleased to profess himself satisfied with his present daily run; but, yet, I can not help thinking that something stronger, something really out of the way, something worthy of *monseigneur's* taste for new impressions—something—*eh, eh*—which, in the period of his opulence, not even I could have devised for him."

A smile of curiosity twisted the nobleman's mouth under its gray fur.

"Ah, bah! Let us hear."

They had crossed the old stone bridge over the Scarpe. Down in the plain the evening mists were rising thickly. Night was falling fast. The two men had gathered closer to each other.

"It will soon be time for me to make off," said Duméril, "and get back to the heights, or I might well lose my way. But the town is yonder, not a thousand *toises*, straight on—so *monseigneur* can not lose his. Well, my idea was this: Lebon's master executioner has lost his aide—that was the evening's news in Arras, just before I left—and may I never go back! There will, of course, be no lack of good patriot applicants for the post, but I will wager that the appearance alone of Horatius Coclès, not to speak of his professional expertness at the sharpening of iron, would give him a first-class chance."

The marquis pulled at his chin dubiously.

"You really think that would amuse me, Duméril?"

In the silence of the roadside a dull faint sound as of many steps could be heard drawing near. A ruddy distant glow through the fog told of approaching lanterns. Duméril went on hurriedly:

"Has *monseigneur* ever in his days known me to fail in interesting him?"

"Why, no, certainly. But——"

"Very well; then let me urge *monseigneur* to think of it. I can promise that none of the heads that must fall this week into the basket ever belonged to an aristocrat. Nothing to vex *monseigneur's* conscience there—upon my word. Whereas, a revenge upon the *canaille*——"

"Aha—I begin to see the idea," said the marquis with a short ferocious cackle. "Yes, always—to the very last—your ideas have proved good. I will think of it."

"And now," returned Duméril, "if M. le Marquis will give me leave—I don't quite like those footsteps—it sounds like a patrol——"

"One moment," said *monseigneur* kindly. "A pinch from my box, good friend."

In acknowledgment of the condescension the ex-administrator of *monseigneur's* pleasures took off the foxcap. He inserted his fingers into the proffered wooden box, disposed of the snuff with something of an air, bowed profoundly in the dark and made off toward the bridge at a rapid pace.

M. le Marquis resumed his place between the shafts and clapped on his way toward the town.

CHAPTER III

MEETING AT THE BRINK

WHETHER the misery of the people, as Duméril had bitterly remarked, was altered for better or for worse by the new order of things, there could be no doubt that, in the immediate entourage of the people's representative, life was spent on the lap of abundance.

Arras, the headquarters of Joseph Lebon's labors in the congenial task of lopping off "the multitudinous heads of the Hydra, counter-Revolution"—Arras, the ancient and once nobly prosperous city, might be perhaps the most somber, the most desolate, place in France. Its commerce might be annihilated; its streets silent, mournful; its admirable public buildings tenanted only

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by prisoners, suspects to the new liberty. It might be looked upon as the *Ville Maudite*, the accursed town which travelers would go leagues out of their way to avoid. It might be all that, but the terrible conventional and his court led an existence of undeniable enjoyment.

Lebon's family life was happily united. He had settled down with his wife—a handsome Megæra who was rarely seen, even on the bench of the revolutionary tribunal over which she virtually presided, without an infant on her lap or at her breast—in a wondrous old house dating from the Austrian days of the sixteenth century and still luxuriously appointed.

The mansion was vast, but Lebon managed to fill it with congenial company. It accommodated, *en famille*, the judges of the summary tribunal, the public accusers, the head jailers and the master executioner himself—a singularly entertaining personage—full of dry humor, good at a song over a bottle.

There was also one Rémy, foreman of that gang of professional jurymen who never fell into the weakness of a "not guilty" verdict. A wit, this one, who rarely failed to find some suitable epigram, some impromptu rascally couplets, in the lilts of the "*Carmagnole*" or the "*ça ira*," to fit the appearance of every fresh batch of victims. He was second to none for discovering, in the least likely quarters, "enemies to the nation," "aristocrats at the back of their minds," "reactionaries waiting in disguise;" and, under his care, the weekly supply of "calves' heads" was never allowed to fall below the required average.

This ingenious youth, who had an odd fancy for bright yellow coats and vests, and who accordingly went by the name of "our *petit canarien*," was the delight of the Lebon family and their guests in the old house of the Rue Saint Maurice.

The *bourgeoisie* of Arras might have to keep life going on a daily half-pound of barley bread. But, at the court of the people's representative, food, secured by stern requisition, was of unstinted abundance and of succulent character. After the good day's work, supper was generally a most jovial affair.

On that evening of the third *Vendémiaire*—month of happy vintage—merriment was running specially high in the dignified old room that served as banqueting-hall. There was a full attendance, catered for with fraternal solicitude by Mimi Lebon, the potentate's consort. Twelve scores of oysters, specially despatched from Boulogne, had been an appreciated element of the feast. Three dozen of Chambertin—undeniably grown for some *ci-devant* aristocratic indulgence—were in rapid process of extermination.

It had been nosed out by the *petit canarien* that very day on the premises of one Aristide Lebidoux—whose head, on some occasions, had unpleasantly struck Madame Lebon, taking her walk past his drinking-shop, as having decidedly a guillotine stamp. The yellow mannikin was giving the party a foretaste of the humorous way he would tackle Aristide's case before the tribunal on the morrow; the thing could not miss fire, and the Citoyenne Lebon's *flair* would be proved infallible as usual.

Every one was in the highest good-humored stage of compotation. A similar condition seemed to obtain below-stairs, for it was with a broad grin that one of the red-capped household made his appearance at the door.

"Citizen Commissary," cried the fellow from the threshold "there is yet another good patriot come for the place!"

A shout of laughter from the table interrupted him.

"That's the fourth in two hours!" came with a delighted yell from Mimi Lebon. "Good—*ça ira!* No fear for the nation's work!"

"Tell him he's too late," called the people's representative, with a majestic wave of the hand.

"I told him that, *Citoyen Commissaire.* But he says he has special qualifications. A big devil, he is—and a good *sans culotte.* Oh, for that he's the right sort—a knife-grinder by trade. He has brought his grindstone," pleaded the man. "He says if the Citizen Commissary will only hear him——"

"Bring him up," cut in Mimi Lebon authoritatively. "It's good comedy, this! Let us see number four. We'll choose, but let us see number four!"

The man disappeared, leaving the door open. There fell in the room, the first silence it had known that evening; but a smile of expectation was on every face.

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UP THE stone stairs came a slow clapping of wooden shoes. The *ci-devant* Marquis de Pontivry, stooping, one shoulder a trifle higher than the other, his face set in consummate bestiality, appeared within the door-frame to be greeted by a burst of renewed laughter.

"Citizen Representative," he grunted, when the noise had subsided a little, "salute and fraternity! Also the good company of patriots all. Well?" he added after a pause, sending a ferocious leer round the assembly. "Am I to have a chance to grind the national razor—*hein?* And give a hand to the national shave?"

"Thou should'st have applied sooner," said Lebon. "Why, in the devil's name, could'st thou not come sooner?"

"Because I only heard of it ten minutes ago, that's why. I was footing it lively, to get through the gates before lock-up. I ran my barrow into a good Arras rump. 'Oh, *là là!*' he howls. 'What's the hurry, *compère?*' he grins at me. 'Coming up to put Michel's razor over the stone?' he says. 'Who's Michel?' says I. 'Michel,' says he, 'who shortens the aristos.' 'A job for me,' says I. 'Where does he lodge? That's the job for me,' I tell him again, 'to lend a fist for the national purge,' I says.

"Then he tells me that perhaps, with luck, I'd get the place. The Citizen Michel, he says, has a vacancy for an aide. 'There's luck!' I says. 'Shortening aristos, that's work after my stomach!' And he laughs and shows me the way—thinking it all a lark. But here I am, citizen, and what I say is: others may be before me, but I am the better man, I say."

The marquis swept the conclave again with a glance of his solitary eye, and let it rest at last upon the woman. It implied deference to her as the arbiter in the case.

"And besides," he growled on, "it is not as if I wanted the job for permanence, as if I would keep another good patriot out of the place. No. I've got my wheel to trundle. But I'd like to think—along the road—that I had done at least one day's job for the nation. Something to ruminate on—click—vlan—flop! Another aristo to the sneezing basket—ah, yes! Well? Am I to get it—just for one day?"

A perfect devilment seemed to have taken possession of the marquis as he played his rôle. Voice, gesture, ignoble leer, all were equally telling.

"*Ah ça*, but he pleases me, that one!" cried the delighted Mimi Lebon. "And I tell you what: he's going to have it. The others. They can wait. One-Eye is the man—understand? It is I who says so."

The fiat had gone.

"Very well—it is thy business, Michel," said Lebon to the guillotine master. "Settle the game with him. And don't let us be bothered with any more," he added, reaching for his tumbler again.

"Come here, *citoyen*," cried Michel, pulling out a pocketbook. "Thy name, thy trade, thy domicile?"

"Domicile—the road. Trade—knife-grinder. Name—Horatius Coclès."

"Eh, what?" interposed Lebon. "It's not a name that! A *nom de guerre*, what?"

"It is my name, though, Citoyen Commissaire, since the birth of liberty. In the days of tyranny they baptized me Jacques—Jacques Voisin, but——"

"Come, it's never thou invented that name!" laughed Lebon, the whilom oratorium, who had some Latinity. "Horatius Coclès, defender of the bridge against the tyrant Porsena."

The applicant scratched his head and assumed a puzzled look.

"Is that the story? *Tiens, tiens, tiens!* Now I understand! It was this way, *citoyen*. At the Tuileries—on the day when we were doing for those brigands of Swiss Guards, it was I blocked the foot-bridge on the terrace, and one of those pigs knocked my eye endways—blast him! The sawbones who cleared the hole said I ought to be known as the modern Horatius Coclès. I, for one, thought it had a good cock sound—the cock of liberty or something. It seemed a good name enough. So I rebaptized myself Horatius Coclès.

"An Anabaptist—*quoi?*" called out the canary-colored wit, and a shout of laughter greeted the sally.

"Anyhow, Citizen Michel," went on the knife-grinder, in a surly tone, "that is my name under the republic, one and indivisible."

"There! Did not I know at once," screamed Mimi in huge delight, "he was one of the pure! Give him a good swig of that swine Lebidoux' hidden store to drink to the smashing of counter-revolution."

Some one pushed forward a thick tumbler, filled to overflowing with a certain Cham-

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bertin which—after an uncouth salutation to the presiding *ménade*—the new *aide-bourreau* drank with noisy greediness. Something in its flavor reminded him curiously of a certain well-remembered vintage of his own in the cellars of Pontivry.

"There, papa!" said the executioner—a man not past the middle age—after writing a few lines on a sheet. "Take this to thy comrade, Humbert. He'll put thee up to the work—and the day after tomorrow thou shalt try thy hand at the *petite fête*."

"Salute, the company!" said Horatius Coclès. He took the slip and, at his shambling pace, clattered back the way he had come.

TO SUIT Lebon's taste for scenic display, the Arras guillotine was erected in the Petite Place—that gem of Renaissance architecture. Uniform stone-gabled houses, high-windowed over regular arcades, made of its restricted space, scarce more than a hundred feet in width, an ideal open-air theater—pit, grand tier and gallery of unimpeachable design. At one side of the square the broad balcony of the Comédie provided a truly royal box for the potentates of the day.

A band was in attendance at the foot of the scaffold, braying at intervals the "*ça ira*," the "*Réveil du Peuple*" and other hymns to the glorious new liberty.

Adjacent streets might be silent, mournfully stupefied, but there was more than riffraff enough within the old walls of the town to fill the Petite Place with raucous clangor and flare of *bonnets-rouges* on every recurrent blood-feast day.

A prolonged roll of drum announced the arrival of the tumbril with its fated load—the opening of the play. And soon after the *grande loge* of the Comédie was made gay by the appearance of the representative and his court, a gaudy group, flaming in the brilliant scarfs of office—Lebon himself the most outrageous flamingo in his gold-braided full dress, a green riding-coat half-unbuttoned to display the scarlet revers, with a brace of unnecessary pistols thrust beneath the tricolor sash. He leaned negligently with one hand upon the hilt of a portentous gold-hilted scimitar and fluttered a scented handkerchief affectedly with the other.

The *Citoyenne Représentante*—with the inevitable infant in her arms—gave a note of sky-blue, and the Citoyen Rémy, chief impressario of the function, his usual flash of canary yellow, to the pervading red hues. Lebon's court—minus of course the Citoyen Michel, gravely intent on his office—inspecting and testing with the eye of experience, the appointments of the national avenging machine.

A universal shout of laughing approval greeted the appearance aloft of the new acolyte—so oddly tall, in spite of his stooping shoulders, by the side of his dapper confrère, Humbert, the *aide-bourreau*.

WHAT were the inner thoughts of the experience-seeking Marquis de Pontivry? Whether he regretted that last "idea" of M. Duméril, or commended it as something worth seeing through—something really suitable to the times even as his former devices had been to a voluptuary age—there was nothing in the stolid countenance to show. He had accepted a new rôle in what he was apt to call "life's comedy", and he was acting it with all due artistic sense—that is to say with fitting surliness. And, in truth, his performance met with high approval, not only in the pit, but in the potentate's box—especially with Mimi Lebon.

"But, just look at One-Eye—how he tips them over the plank!" she would exclaim, ever and anon pointing an excited finger at her protégé. "Smart, *hein*, my One-Eye? Businesslike, *hein?* And now tell me if it would not have been a shame to deny him his pleasure!"

Whether pleasure could be found there—whether even any great interest—was, however, the question M. le Marquis de Pontivry was asking himself. What could Duméril have meant? His participation to the routine work of the scaffold would make no conceivable difference to any of the wretches. They were one and all irretrievably doomed—doomed to a fate that might so easily have been his own—aye, and for that matter, might easily yet be. It could not be that. What then?

A dozen, sinful or innocent, had been sent to their last account—most of them, probably, to a better world; and, though the Marquis de Pontivry went through his task with an unabated realistic show of zest, expectation at the back of his thoughts was beginning to give place to discontent. The repeated effort of stooping over the

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plank had filled his empty socket with pain that grew every instant more intolerable. No. There was nothing desirable in this experience. That was flat. Duméril's "idea" was hollow foolishness. Incomprehensible.

But, as he drew himself up for the twelfth time to receive a fresh patient in his arms, M. le Marquis at last understood.

A savage grin bared his teeth as he looked up and down the newcomer—a coarsely powerful, low-browed fellow, whose face, by nature florid, an abject fright had turned to verdigris hue.

"Oho!" he murmured. "So—Thiébaut, my man! So—you've come to the basket! Eh, an unlooked for meeting—but none the worse for that!" he went on, seizing him ferociously.

The man looked at him with unintelligent stare, for, in truth, his whilom benefactor was not to be recognized. But as, struggling frantically, he was pressed forward toward the fatal plank, he heard the words poured mockingly down his ear:

"*Eh*, Thiébaut—it was a merry interview at Compiègne. But he laughs best who laughs the last!"

Light flashed through his dazed brain. He snapped at the cheek close to his head, yelped, snarled like a furious dog; then he broke into inarticulate shouts.

"Stop—give me time! I want to speak! I want to denounce——"

The words were drowned in the shouts of the mob, hugely delighted, after a rather monotonous sequence, both by the victim's raging efforts and the inexorable mastery with which the popular Horatius Coclès dealt with them. And the thud of the falling ax sealed the secret that had come so near betrayal—Duméril had been no fool.

"Ouf!" grunted the marquis, drawing a blue cotton handkerchief and dabbing at his streaming eye. "Tiring work, gossip! But thirteen was the best number on the programme.

"Tired, Papa Coclès?" said Michel with his humorous smile. "Well, there's only one more to the batch. Ah, he had not long to wait, that one. Caught only the other night. He was already on the hop. But we had him!"

With a snort of annoyance Horatius Coclès turned toward the stairs; then remained as if palsied, the blue handkerchief still held in mid-air. Under his bristling beard his face grew deathly white. Slowly his arm dropped by his side. Happily there were no eyes for him, all were turned toward the last comer who, with hands tied behind his back, his bald head bare, haggard and very pale, but perfectly self-possessed, was firmly mounting the scaffold steps—a demeanor strangely different from aught that had been witnessed that day.

"*Salut, messieurs!*" said Duméril steadily, and in his own natural voice.

Humbert the aide shot at Michel, the master, a meaning glance: surprize and venomous resentment.

"*Messieurs!* hear him! A —— aristo!" it said eloquently.

"*Messieurs!*" echoed Michel, with restrained indignation. "Dost thou give us the *monsieur? Eh*, that Citoyenne Lebon, she was right—she has the true nose to scent a *ci-devant*. Come, let us have done—and quick the word!"

"Oh, never fear I shall give trouble like a Thiébaut," said Duméril, and he made a grand bow, which, to all appearance, was addressed impartially to the trio of executioners, but which his steady look at Horatius Coclès showed clearly enough to be meant for his own *seigneur*.

The two men gazed fixedly at each other during the few seconds required by Humbert to turn down more suitably the victim's collar. In those few silent seconds thoughts flew between them, wordless but clear as dewdrops, swift as bees—appeals from the servant, solicitous to the last about his master's safety, to the master, who at that supreme moment realized for the first time that there had been something warmer than mere condescension in his feelings for this attendant of thirty years. A full volume can be expressed in one glance. And the last words of that volume, closing under the shadow of the suspended ax, were plain as largest print:

"Let not *monseigneur* make my fate worse by betraying himself. For heaven's sake let him keep his countenance! I know M. le Marquis, like a true *seigneur*, would sacrifice himself if that could save his servitor. But it could not. And I beg his forgiveness for bringing him to this pass—beg him to leave me the consolation to think I shall not have brought him to death, too. The only way is to play the thing out, without flinching."

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"Are we ready?" called Michel, in some dudgeon.

"Yes, be assured I am ready," answered Duméril quietly. And then as the aides closed upon him from either side, "*Seigneur, mercil*" he said, but this time in a choking voice.

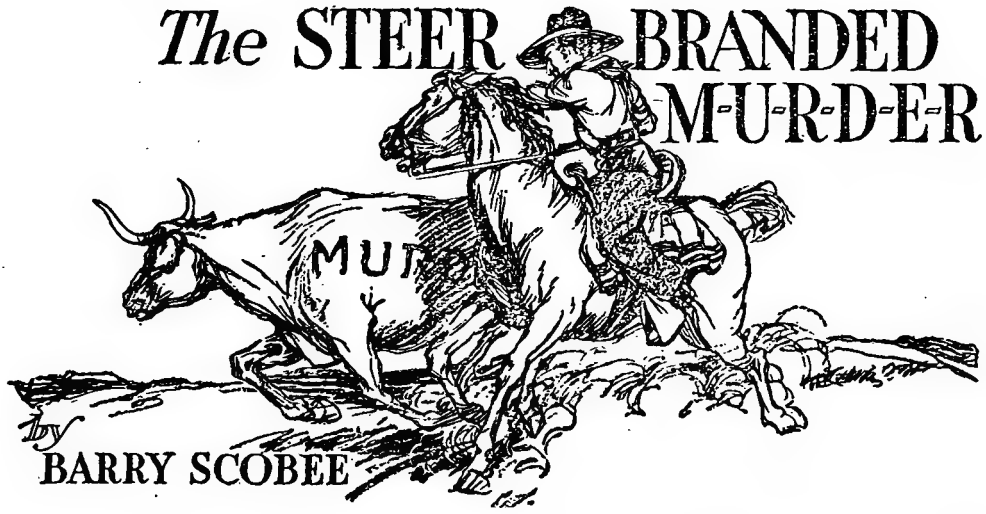
He had felt, as he was being lowered upon the plank, his master's hand pressing his own with a sort of caress, gentle but nervous like a sob.

"No mistake about that last one being a real aristocrat, Citoyen Michel," said Horatius Coclès, mopping his forehead, at the close of this fine day's work for the nation.

There was a strange glitter in the solitary eye that confirmed the Citoyen Michel's belief in the unshakeable *civisme* of his journeyman.

IT WAS somewhere midway between Valenciennes and Arras—for he had lost no time in leaving as far behind him as possible the Ville Maudite—that M. le Marquis, very tired, shivering as he sat down at dusk on a heap of stones by the roadside, realized that Duméril's ingenuity was making him acquainted with yet a new sensation—one indeed he fain now would have ignored. He who had never found time, in all his long life, to mourn the loss of any fellow creature felt the bitterness of regret.

The STEER BRANDED M-U-R-D-E-R



by BARRY SCOBEE

NOTE—It is a fact that in Brewster County, Texas, in the early '90s, a cowboy branded a steer with the word "Murder" after killings had taken place over it. The animal was seen occasionally for many years, a sort of pariah of the plains and mountains, grazing wherever it could find sustenance, a living reminder of evil passions.

AS YOUNG Jack Quackenlaw worked a small bunch of cows and calves through the foot-hills, he tried to hurry them and swore vehemently now and then, for the late September day was windy and cold and dusty. He was hungry, too, and kept projecting himself forward to the chuck-wagon, where he knew a pot of beans and fresh beef simmered over a fire beside a boiler of black coffee. Each time he thought of this, he spurred his mount to greater speed and shouted more urgently at the half-wild cattle.

He was especially thrilled in rounding up this bunch, for they belonged to him and his brother, the first season's start of the great droves they would own some day. What fine calves! Fat and sturdy, with inch-long horns—knobs that could hurt when swung against one's hips and thighs in the wild struggle of the branding-pen. But wild as deer; confound them!

He whooped and spurred and shivered under the acid wind from the mountains and spat out grit from his teeth and at last, when the sun was past the afternoon quarter, topped the last ridge on the way to the day's camp. As he came in sight of it,

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he took in the little rincon where the cattle from the round-up were held until the Moon Handle outfit and the Bar-and-Circle could separate their stuff, brand it and start it off to the respective ranges. The scene startled him, for the cattle were trickling out of the natural horseshoe and were stopping in a circle about the branding-fire to low in a frightened way. Four saddled horses stood about, but no man was in sight. Quackenlaw realized that something was wrong. He left his bunch of stock and rode forward rapidly.

The lowing cattle gave back at his approach, stirring up clouds of dust in their sidewise retreat. When the wind whipped this fog away, the cowboy saw four men in crumpled heaps lying in the vicinity of the gray spot where the branding-fire had burned. He sprang off and bent over one of the men.

"Lafe!" he cried. "Lafe!"

A groan answered him, and as easily as he could he turned his brother from out of the soak of blood on to his back. Tearing open the blue woolen shirt, he saw a black hole through the left lung, close to the heart.

"Who shot you, Lafe?" he demanded. "Tell me, brother, tell me who shot you."

Lafe muttered and coughed and called for water. Jack ran for water and when Lafe had drunk he demanded again to know who had done the shooting. He was insistent, for it was apparent that the wounded man was at the verge of death.

Lafe swung a hand and tried to point.

"Quarrel," he muttered. "Calf—claimed it."

"Who claimed it? Who shot?"

But Lafe did not answer that question; he sank away and in two minutes was dead in his younger brother's arms.

Jack rose stiffly and looked around. The other men were obviously dead, but to make certain he examined each one—Moon, his employer and owner of the Moon Handle outfit, and Tom Tandy and his hired man—the crew that Jack had left there that morning. He looked at the six-shooter of each man. Three cartridges each had been fired from Tandy's and Moon's, two from Tandy's cowboy's and one from Lafe Quackenlaw's gun.

"These men were friendly," thought Jack. "There's nothing to show for certain that they killed one another. If they quarreled——"

His roving glance fell upon a calf lying on its side near-by, its fore and hind feet tied together—hog-tied. He sprang over to it and saw that it had been branded with huge letters from the left shoulder to the left hip. He spelled the word out, not that he could not read it at a glance, but in stupified amazement.

"M-u-r-d-e-r—murder!"

The branding-iron—a running-iron made from the tail-gate rod of a wagon by bending one end like a shepherd's crook—lay under his feet. He bent and regarded the workmanship of the brand. The red-hot iron had cleaved through the thick red hair and into the skin evenly in every line. Some one who knew his business, he thought. The question was: who was that some one? Why had he made this brand? What did he know? Had he done murder and left this word of it?

"I'll find out who killed my brother if it is the last thing I do in this world," young Quackenlaw swore. "And I will kill him."

Though he was of the West, this was Jack's first experience with the dead. For a while he stumbled about, gazing unseeing across the hills and valleys, looking stupidly down at his brother or the other bodies. Some little time passed until a clear realization of the tragedy came to him; then he took hold of himself and thought connectedly. The result of this was that he first caught up the saddle-horses and tied them by their reins to the chuck-wagon. Then he lifted the bodies to their respective saddles and bound them there with the saddle-ropes, finding Lafe's holding the branded calf.

He loosed the calf then and bound his brother's body to the saddle with the rope. After this task was done, he drank a quart of hot coffee and set off down the cold and dusty trail at dusk toward Bafton, twenty miles away. As the red sun faded, a great white moon rose over the fiery horizon to light the way for the procession—horses led by saddle-ropes tied to the one ahead, single file.

When Jack had made about half of the twenty miles, he became aware of a horseman approaching from the east along the dim trail that came from the Tandy ranch headquarters. He stopped and when the stranger was fifty yards away, called out:

"Hello! Who is it?"

The horseman stopped.

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"Hello!" he returned, neither surprized nor startled, showing that he had observed the approach of Jack. Yet his question showed how interested he was. "Who is it? Anything wrong?"

"Who are you?" Jack asked again, his voice peremptory, high on the wind.

"Henry Lord, the cattle-buyer."

"This is Jack Quackenlaw. I work for Sam Moon. Where have you been?"

Lord did not answer, but nudged his horse forward and began to bend forward and peer through the light night. Close by he checked up, startled.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed in awed tones, staring at the figures over the saddles. "What—what—are they all dead?"

IT OCCURRED to Jack that Lord had too much anxiety in this query. He speculated for a brief moment that a man who was totally clear of the matter would have asked "What has happened?" But the cowboy was upset and suspicious, and every act of the cattle-buyer seemed off color.

"All dead," he answered succinctly, unable to keep hard antagonism from his tone. "Where have you been?"

Lord hesitated, then answered as if eager to give the information.

"Why, I've been looking at Tom Tandy's stuff. I had dinner at his headquarters. I was looking at some of Moon's yearlings, too."

"Did you see them—Tandy and Moon?"

"Tandy wasn't at home," Lord answered, and Jack, keen as a whip, noted the evasion. "But what happened?" Lord threw off his defensive attitude and assumed the offensive. "Who are these men?"

"Tom Tandy and Sam Moon's two of 'em. One's my brother Lafe and the other's Tandy's man, 'Slim' Acers. I found 'em dead by their branding-fire, except Lafe."

"What did Lafe say?" The question was meant to be merely interested; yet it carried an edge of eagerness, Jack noted.

"Said there was a quarrel over a calf. And what I want to know is who the quarrel was with."

"Who did the shooting?"

"He didn't say. He said there was a quarrel and then he died—shot in the heart muscles, maybe, or right close."

"They must have quarreled among themselves over the calf."

"Maybe—but it ain't reasonable. There wasn't any hard feelings to make 'em mean. Somebody else was there, Mr. Lord," Jack blurted out. "A calf was hog-tied and was freshly branded with letters spelling murder. Now whoever done that could tell about this shootin'. The dead men didn't do the brandin'. Lafe was too bad shot. Maybe whoever it was used that runnin'-iron—somehow—caused—this thing."

"He might have had a hand in it," Lord answered.

Quackenlaw suddenly got down from his horse and stepped over to the other man. He knew of Lord, knew him to bear the reputation of a good men, a square dealer, an upright citizen, and he hesitated to make charges—"get personal", as he expressed it to himself. He had been trying, as he talked, to encourage himself to the ordeal.

"Mr. Lord," said he, his tone half-belligerent, half-apologetic, "you are called a fair-dealin' man. What—what do you know about this?"

"What do I know about it! Do you mean to accuse me?"

"Not yet, but—I asked if you had seen Tom Tandy and you didn't say yes or no. Now I ask again: did you see him today?"

"No!" The word squirted from him like a slick seed from a boy's fingers.

"Did you see Moon?"

"No."

"Do you know anything about this shooting?"

"No, except what you've told me."

"All right, Mr. Lord. I'll take your word. But I want to say this: I'm going to get the man who got Lafe if that man's alive."

The young man grimly returned to his horse.

"I'll shoot him," he added, "if it's the last thing I do."

As they rode side by side toward Bafton, Lord asking an infrequent question, Jack reasoned the matter out logically. Lord was an honest man, honest as old Sam Moon had been, and though his actions had been queer, to say the least, they had not been flagrantly guilty. Jackson saw he could not make charges. He would not be believed. So he dropped the matter from his mind for the time and took up the

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thought of what he would do on arrival at Bafton. Later on they discussed the subject.

"It's getting late," Lord said. "Must be close on to ten o'clock. Everything will be closed."

"Except the saloon," Jack vouchsafed.

This put a new thought into his mind: whoever had done the killing might go to the saloon to dull the fresh edge of his, or their, feelings. Such often happened. He decided to go first to the Round-up saloon.

When they rode slowly into the main street of the village, that was scattered out along the Southern Pacific, they saw that indeed the only light, except at private homes, shone dimly from the dusty panes of the drinking-place. And there they stopped, the dead men hanging on their stomachs over the saddles, stretched out in a row, horse behind horse.

Jack strode ahead and stopped just inside the door to survey the crowd. He blinked in the light at first, but he was as grim as vengeance itself. A dozen men stood about, some with their backs to the bar, leaning on their elbows, others sitting on a table. Probably fifteen men were there. Jack knew half of them and, taking them in one by one, he saw Rake Tandy, a scapegrace brother ranchman of Tom Tandy's, and Walden, Moon's foreman on a ranch down near the Rio Grande.

Walden, because of his habits when drinking, had earned the sobriquet of "Bad Bill of the Big Bend." At the entrance of Quackenlaw and Lord, the crowd faced toward them and, at sight of the grim faces of the two, fell silent and staring, each man's gun-hand moving almost imperceptibly toward his revolver scabbard and poising there.

"Well?" some one barked presently. "What ails ye?"

"Have a drink and soften up," another advised.

"There's been a shooting," Jack announced in a level voice and watched to see whose hand would go to a gun.

No man moved, however. They stood silent and waitful, never taking their eyes from the two at the door.

"Four men are dead," said Lord.

"Moon, Tom Tandy, Slim Acers and my brother Lafe."

"How?" And Rake Tandy slid from the table where he had been sitting.

"Don't know. I found 'em by their branding-fire. Lafe wasn't dead, but he died before he could tell, except to say something about a quarrel over a calf."

"Looks like Lafe might have done it," Tandy surmised in an accusatory way.

"That would be a lie," Jack retorted in a surprized and harsh voice. "He hadn't but one cartridge gone from his gun."

"How many times was Tom Tandy hit?" Bad Bill asked, his hand gripping the butt of his big revolver.

"Once."

"Your brother shot him," Bad Bill said in a voice heavy with conviction. "But Tandy shot the others. It was like the —— bully. The Tandys er built that way."

"Don't talk about the dead," Rake Tandy instructed coldly. As he glared at Bad Bill Walden, his hand sought his gun; but it never found the feel of the handle, for Bad Bill pulled his scabbard to a level and fired twice from his waist, never even taking the gun out, and Rake Tandy toppled sidewise from the table, dead before he struck the floor.

Walden backed to the door, feeling safe at the hands of Jack and Lord, and before he went out he said in self-extenuation:

"Moon was a white man. The Tandys got him and they all ought to be got. You all noticed I shot that Rake there in self-defense."

And this was the first of many shootings over the first killing. A Western cowland feud was launched.

IF MEN had witnessed Jack Quackenlaw's actions the next morning, they might have delved in a direction that was neglected for a long time. He slept on the hay in the livery-stable and, as soon as the men there were up with day-light, watched his opportunity and examined the shoes of Lord's horse. He counted the nails and measured the width of the shoes; then he rode without explanation to the place of the tragedy. This trip was without success, however, for the wind of the evening before had obliterated all tracks to nothingness. He failed to find one imprint that might have been made by the horse Lord rode. Yet his mind was not satisfied, though he could not believe that "Big Henry" Lord was in any way guilty.

Lafe and Slim were buried that afternoon at Bafton; Tom Tandy and Rake Tandy at a

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place north of Sanderson; and Moon on his ranch at the edge of the Davis Mountains. The Tandy kin were at the Tandy funeral, and Bad Bill attended the Moon obsequies. Among the Tandy kin was Sol Hartt, brother-in-law of Rake. Early in the day following the burials Hartt arrived in Bafton on the train. He stood around on the street corners or morosely sat on goods boxes and whittled, but all the time he kept a furtive eye out to the north, as if expecting some one for whom he waited to ride in.

Jack was not in town. He had returned to the Moon ranch to look after his little herd of cows. He was not interested in the shooting of Rake Tandy or in any troubles that he foresaw would develop. His mind was constantly turning over the question of who branded the white-faced Hereford calf and made it a steer. Whoever did that was the man, or men, he wished to find. If Lord did it, why did he deny it? It was impossible to believe that the cattle-buyer had slain four men and not received a wound.

In the afternoon of that day on which Hartt waited, Bad Bill of the Big Bend, on his way to the ranch "down below," rode into Bafton. He was not unsuspecting and careless. On the other hand he was sharply on the lookout, for in those days a man who shot as he had shot Rake Tandy had to be alert to remain above sod. But Hartt, brought up in that trackless country that lies east and northward of the Chisos Mountains, had something of the lurker in him, something of the Apache who roamed that same country in earlier times. He saw Bad Bill galloping down the street and stepped around the corner of a drug-store. When Walden came abreast, Hartt fired, and another killing was added to the freshly opened list.

The whole country asked and tried hard to find who was there, after the original shooting, to brand the calf. They argued that Moon and Tom Tandy and the other two could not have done it. There would have been no reason. No murder had then been done. Mrs. Tom Tandy told of Henry Lord eating dinner with her and the children at the headquarters and of his setting out to find Tandy—and Moon also, on his learning that the two men were together.

Lord declared that he had never found the branding-place, that he had strayed off in following the yearlings and, deciding that they were in too poor a condition to pay the price Mrs. Tandy said was asked, had started back toward Bafton late in the evening. He recounted meeting Jack Quackenlaw a while after eight o'clock. Not one man or woman who had known the Lords for years before they moved to Rosway would believe that he was in any way connected with the affair, since he said that he wasn't. In fact, there was no gossip about him at all.

There was some talk about Jack, but he was not really suspected. It was pointed out that had there been a fight with him in it, he would not have kept silent about it unless he and his brother were to blame, but that if those two had stood against the others in a shooting scrape Jack would not have come off with a whole skin in the first place. So this talk died a natural death, for, besides the logic of it, Jack was an upright young man with something about him that urged belief in him.

Another man now became involved in the growing branches of the feud tree. Sam Moon had a nephew who gambled and caroused and fairly ached to be a creditable prototype of historical bad-men. He loafed, when he wasn't sleeping or gambling, in a pool-hall at Bafton, and he opined now and then that he was a bit faster with the gun than Hartt, slayer of Bad Bill, his uncle's foreman. This braggart was Cleve Botts, and it was generously and generally admitted that he was a shrewd faro-dealer.

Hartt outlucked Botts' card shrewdness one night. The next morning a feeble-minded fellow who worked at the livery-stable found Hartt's body, sodden in the rain, lying under the back alley eaves of the stable. Not one single shred of evidence was found to indicate that Botts had done the crime, and, after Botts began to see how matters stood, he took on a superior air and swaggered more than ever. Everybody felt that he was the marksman, unfair at that, and wondered who would get him.

In the meantime a great many persons had seen the calf. Mrs. Tom Tandy had it driven off her range. The cowboy who drove it might have had a shade of feeling against the Moon Handle outfit, for when he headed the animal away from the Bar-and-Circle he went further and drove it well into the Moon pastures. Mrs. Tandy could not have been back of this, for she was

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a kindly woman, incapable of such small animosity.

Jack Quackenlaw came across the "murder calf" one April day when he was bossing for the Moon Handle. It was headed, in its grazing, toward the headquarters house. He had an antipathy toward it, a feeling of revulsion as toward an unclean thing. In his sight it was leprous, and he drove it all day and a while at night, until it had passed well north of the ranch.

As always in such feuds, or chain of killings, the unexpected and unconnected came in. One Summer day the male citizens of Bafton were gathered, pretty near to the last man, on the gravel platform of the railway station to see the westbound train safely through on its way to San Francisco. As they observed the town lawyer board the day-coach to go to El Paso, they saw a man get off and look around him.

He was in new cowboy habiliments, which it was learned afterward he had purchased in San Antonio, and he had a wild and prancing look in his red-rimmed blue eyes. Also—learned later—he claimed he was from the Bowery, in the famous city of New York, but, judging by his language, this was manifestly false. On the same premise, it appeared more likely that he was from Ohio or Indiana. Anyway, he approached the group of citizens as the train rolled on and demanded to know where the town's drinking-place was.

"Pump or bar?" asked the town wag, an elderly man.

"For that," the wild Eastern cowboy declared, removing a big bright gun from its new and creaking leather scabbard, "you can do a dance for us."

Before anybody grasped his intentions, he was firing rapidly in the general direction of the wag's feet.

"Whoop-ee!" cried the stranger. "Flap your feet!"

But the elderly citizen was too much of a Westerner to do this time-honored trick under the gun of a mere Easterner and stood stock-still at first; then turned around and walked off, a magnificent disgust on his countenance. The crowd laughed—at both of them.

"All right," said the newcomer, "let's go and wet our throats." Seeing the crowd hesitate, he flipped a five-dollar bill from his new boot-top. "I've got the mun and I've got the gun," he bawled, "and I'm the bad-man that'll make you go if you don't get a shove on ye."

He swaggered and flourished the shiny revolver. All at once the same idea of a joke entered the minds of everybody in sight of the five-dollar bill. They would drink with him, and in a body they fell in behind, following the swinging new cowboy toward the saloon across the track.

"Everybody! Everybody!" shouted Lem Topper, as his name turned out to be. "Come and drink with a bad-man from the Bowery!"

Now the man who dispensed liquor over the bar of the Round-up was much too huge and high-tempered to be a bartender. He was too dangerous. Topper, however, did not know this. He swaggered inside and, laying his gun down on the bar, demanded to be served with the hottest, biggest, rabidest liquor west of Pecos High Bridge. "Big Bart" was on the edge of starting something rough when he saw the winks of friends in the procession and caught on. He served everybody, perhaps three dozen in all. Then Topper flipped the five-dollar note across the bar with easy nonchalance. Big Bart figured on his fingers a half a minute and asked for two dollars more.

"Eh?" asked the newcomer.

"Two dollars more, I said! Where do you think you are! Whisky ain't fifteen cents in this burg. This is a two-bit town."

Anybody would wilt before Big Bart. Topper wilted and looked around for a way to escape. But both back and rear doors were well blocked by his guests.

"I ain't got but a nickel more," he informed meekly.

To shorten a disagreeable scene: after Bart got through shaking the tough from the Bowery, so-called, the tough agreed to go to work as roustabout and pay the two dollars and otherwise make himself respectable by employment at the Round-up.

The town laughed for days at the sight of a man in cowboy boots, wide hat, chaps, gun and red neckerchief emptying cuspidors and sweeping. But, of them all, Cleve Botts, the tinhorn gambler, laughed most and egged Topper, the simple, into wrath. He taunted him about his toughness and planted hate for himself in the misguided heart of the would-be bad-man. Botts' crowning achievement was to win in three minutes all of Topper's first month's pay,

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then boast before the whole bar and in Topper's presence how he had tricked him.

BEFORE and on this day of Topper's humiliation and loss, two events took place that were closely connected with the long thread that Fate was spinning from the tragedy by the branding-fire. Some days after Topper's appearance a few of the citizens, including the town marshal, became aware of the presence of a stranger. His name, it was learned, was Andy Sims, and eventually it came out that he was a member of the Tandy-Hartt tribe by some distant and uncertain connection.

He did not burst upon the consciousness of the town; indeed, never became known by many persons. He was furtive and associated a great deal with the Mexican cowboy class. He had a way of going into a store, unnoticed by any one, buying a pouch of tobacco or some wearing-apparel and disappearing again into the unknown around town. Thus, little was seen of him. But the town night-watch said that Sims was a killer and worth watching.

On the very day of Topper's losing, Henry Lord, accompanied by his wife, came to town from Rosway. He was his big whole-souled self as usual, jolly, sympathetic—yet, withal, having some sort of mental burden in mind that two or three of his old cronies noted. This, however, was not connected with a query that he made once—just once. He asked if there was to be prayer-meeting that night, Wednesday, as usual. Told there was, he seemed to be even more distressed than ever; yet this was not thought of until afterward, in fact, the next day.

That night Lord went to the little church that stood two blocks away from the Round-up. The usual congregation of about fifty persons was present. Lord listened abstractedly at times and with bright interest at other times—it was told the next day—to the brief talks and testimonials of the brothers and sisters and once or twice started to his feet as if to add his testimony of the Divine goodness. This was unusual; though he had attended church service regularly, he had never committed that act of religion commonly referred to as "testifying." Always this night he was defeated in his good intention by finding some brother or sister up ahead of him.

At last, however, his opportunity came, and, just as he gained his feet, the heavy report of a shotgun rolled against their ears. Lord hummed and hawed, said trite words—merely the echoes of what others had been saying for a half-hour. He would pause and clear his throat and try to start on some subject that was near his heart, when his courage would melt and he again would mouth commonplaces. His audience became tensed with curiosity.

In a momentary silence—dead silence there within the holy place—footsteps were heard running toward the church. They passed by the open front door; then just beyond they stopped, and a youthful voice called out—

"Frazer?"

"Yeh?" came the querulous answer of the night-watch from near-by.

He probably had been listening to the service from the other side of the street.

"Down at the saloon!" the youthful voice said in great excitement. "Cleve Botts has been shot—bullet came through the window—dead!"

Two pairs of feet began a gritty *rat-tat-tat* on the brick sidewalk, the sound dying in the general direction of the saloon while the congregation sat in tense silence.

Henry Lord, who had been standing with his mouth half-open as if about to speak, sat down suddenly. The preacher, a wise old man, hastily brought the service to a conclusion by the singing of two stanzas of a hymn and the benediction. The audience hurried out; yet many must have felt extreme disappointment in not hearing whatever momentous thing Lord had meant to say—some revelation, no doubt, that would have ranked with the excitement that confronted them over the shooting.

It was in keeping with the vagaries of life that fitfully controls what a man hears and what he doesn't hear that Jack Quackenlaw never received an inkling of this incident touching Lord's strange mental attitude at the church. Had he done so, it is probable that the correct account of the branded calf would have been in his possession long before it actually was.

Most of the church-goers hurried to the throng that gathered before the Round-up. Cleve Botts was dead, shot through the breast by a heavy charge of buckshot as he sat in a poker game. The shot had been

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fired by some unknown assassin through a window in the back end of the saloon. No one grieved a great deal for the gambler, but there was a world of indignation that such atrocities could be committed right in the very heart of Bafton.

"Where was Frazer, anyhow? What was he paid to do; could anybody tell?"

The usual questions of indignant citizens.

A bit of local history-on-the-side, so to speak, developed from this affair. A dead man's hand at cards was originated. Many communities have such. When Botts fell forward on the table after the shot, it was found that he had been betting on two pairs—jacks and nines. This occasioned more talk in male circles than the death.

For once the usual question of righteous wrath received an answer in short order. While the throng before the saloon was speaking opprobriously of its peace officials, old Frazer came from the back room of the Round-up, mounted a keg on the front porch and told the people that he knew who had slain Botts. A quick hush and suspense fell over the crowd.

"A stranger," said the night-watch, "a man named Andy Sims."

Several voices called out:

"I know him. Lives with the Mexicans. Slips into town and out again."

"That's him," the night-watch declared. "I saw him on the street tonight, on a back alley with a shotgun. He's a kin to the Rake Tandys and the Hartts. But—" and here the old man spoke with a peculiar emphasis—"don't get the idea you can get a rope off that saddle there and go to the big tree at the edge of town and string him up. Us peace-officers won't stand for it! I know where Sims is. He's at the home of old Pedro, and I'll go there and arrest him."

Some man instantly took the hint, seized Frazer from behind, marched him into the saloon, and all the protestation that he made was vocal.

"You oughten to do this; you oughten to string Sims up that-a-way."

Men of the crowd forthwith went to the home of old Pedro, got the surprized Sims and hanged him to the tree at the edge of town.

Topper was not even suspected of the crime. But it came out that he was guilty instead of Sims, for, shot three months later in an El Paso saloon, he made a written confession before he died. He shot Botts because, he said, Botts had taken his money unfairly and taunted him afterward.

Later some one shot the man who shot Topper, and in turn he was knifed. The tale of death reaching from the original killings by the branding-fire went on and on, written in a haze of pistol smoke, the connection being as dim and feathery as the smoke itself.

The red-bodied, white-faced calf, grown to the status of a rangy steer, was seen infrequently. A cattle-buyer reported having run across it in a herd far north on the Staked Plains. He refused to buy it, and cowboys drove in a southeasterly direction, the thing that somehow men loathed because of the great accusing brand on its side. The next year it was seen on the Pecos in the vicinity of Horsehead Crossing. Two years later a woman, driving alone in a buggy across Leon Valley west of Fort Stockton, came upon the animal grazing by the trail-side. Then for years it was not seen and was all but forgotten until, when it was fourteen years old, Jack Quackenlaw himself came upon the beast one droughty Summer day on his own range in the foot-hills of the Davis Mountains.

JACK QUACKENLAW had become a prosperous ranchman at thirty-five. But this Summer he was in the way of losing all he had accumulated, for the drought had left his range bare and, as the ranchmen had it, the cattle were eating their heads off, with cotton-seed cake costing a prohibitive price and money hard to get. Jack had to do one of two things to obtain money with which to buy feed and meet obligations having to do with a mortgage on another ranch that he had bought.

He either had to sell his poor stuff at a heart-breakingly low price or borrow money. To sell would be a task, as no one wished to buy, and borrowing money would be harder. His neighbor, Clyde Bottoms, in a similar position, had gone either to Kansas City or Chicago to negotiate a loan. Jack went to see Bottoms immediately on the latter's return.

"You couldn't guess in a week who I saw," was the greeting that Bottoms extended Jack. "An old-timer from out here sitting at a polished desk in a stockyards bank and lending money to busted cattlemen like he owned a mint!"

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"Who?" asked the brief-spoken Jack.

"Henry Lord!"

"Henry Lord! I didn't know what had become of him. You got money from him?"

"Just what I asked for—and he took a mortgage on my stuff. He asked about you."

"He did? What did he say? Something neutral? How's my health, I suppose."

"Well, yes. And he asked—well, he wanted to know if you'd ever got the man that got Lafe."

"He asked that?" Jack was surprized.

"He seemed—er—interested a whole lot more than I could account for. He asked if the steer branded 'murder' was still alive and ranging the country. Er—a kind of agitation had a-hold of him."

"What did you tell him?" Jack asked with a supressed eagerness, reminding one of a lawyer on a hot trail.

"I told him you had seen the steer this Summer, running with your cattle. 'Did Quackenlaw kill the thing?' Lord asks me in a low voice, not looking at me, but pushing the point of his lead-pencil into the soft blotter on the desk in front of him. I said you hadn't killed it so far as I knew, recalling what you had told me that day. And Henry Lord said, 'Why the —— didn't he!' Like that, kind of put out. It was the first time I ever heard him swear, even that much. I've been wondering why he was so—worked up about it. But he treated me right white about the money. Invited me down to his house after we arranged the loan. And I went too."

"He didn't extend any pressing invitation to us cowmen down here to call on him for money, did he?"

"Well, can't say he done exactly that. He did tell me to send him any good reliable men in need of money, though—good reliable men, and I reckon you can see him on that card, Jack. Sure, he'll let you have enough to carry you over. You can try it, anyway."

"I don't know," Jack said after a pause, "that I would want to take money from him."

"You don't think——"

"I don't think anything—but I am going to ship a load of canners day after tomorrow and when I am at the stockyards I am going to call on Henry Lord."

Quackenlaw made certain to include in the car of old cows the branded steer, and he gave that car of stuff more attention than he had ever extended to any other.

JACK QUACKENLAW entered the private banking-office of Henry Lord at the stockyards. A flash of recognition passed over the banker's face. He rose quickly and the two stood regarding each other questioningly. Jack saw a man different, in a way, from the cattle-buyer he had known. Lord, the banker, had gray, neatly-trimmed hair; he wore a well-fitting blue serge business suit with a white waistcoat, and the tie and collar fitted snugly. His hands were white and strong and the nails clean. He had an air of quiet force and sophistication.

"Jack Quackenlaw!" he exclaimed. "I'm glad to see you." He passed around the desk and extended a hand. There was no doubt of his genuineness. "Sit down."

"No," the ranchman responded in his direct way. "Before we are friendly or unfriendly, I've got a bunch of canners out here in the yards that I want you to look at. I want maybe to borrow some money."

Again the questioning look appeared in Lord's fine open face; he agreed cheerfully, took his hat, and the two stepped out. Only commonplaces were spoken on the way to the exchange, then to the pen—mostly Jack's brief answers to Lord's friendly questions of the people they both knew.

"There," Jack pointed in a short time. "That's my bunch of canners. Look at 'em good."

In a moment, as if by a prearranged movement, the bunch split and left standing alone, as if for a photograph, the steer branded "murder". Its left side, with the hideous brand, was plain for them to read.

Jack sought the gaze of Lord, and Lord looked him straight in the eyes.

"Now I'll talk," Jack said, and Lord led the way back to the office.

Inside again, the business-man locked the door and sat down by the desk. He pointed out an easy chair for Quackenlaw, who sat down. The older man sat for a moment, punching the point of his lead-pencil into the soft texture of the desk-blotter, as if searching his mind for a way to begin. Jack simply waited.

"Jack," the banker asked presently, still feeling his way, "do you know what fear—terror is?"

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The ranchman only watched. His lips, if anything, closed in a grimmer line.

"I know," Lord went on. "I'll tell you. Maybe what happens is always for the best, if we meet the happenings right. I don't know, but I do know that what happened back there fourteen years ago has made me a fearless man, as to my actions and convictions. So that is some gain. But back there I knew what fear was." He paused for a moment then went on. "You remember that day—cold and windy and dusty—the sort of weather to try a man's temper and get him all on edge. Especially if affairs are not going well with him.

"I did see your brother Lafe and Moon and the others that day. I was at their camp. As Mrs. Tandy said, I ate dinner at the ranch-house, but, instead of spending the afternoon in riding over the ranch looking at the cattle, I rode straight to the branding-place, arriving there about half-past two. I lied when I told you I had not been there. I lied, and that lie has been on my conscience ever since, a kind of whip to honesty. I lied because I was in a panic of fear—that acute disease which seizes and destroys like an epidemic that a doctor would acknowledge.

"As I approached the place, I met Tom Tandy three hundred yards from the camp, where he was heading some of his freshly-branded stuff back toward his own land.

" 'Hello!' he called out gruffly. 'Out to rob somebody?'

"Now, you know they often greet a cattle-buyer in that style; so I thought nothing of it, making some reply about the mean day.

" 'It's mean all right,' Tandy agreed, 'like some men I know.' I saw he was in a black mood, and waited for him to say more so I could find a handle to his good-humor. But he kept right on. 'If you want to rob me,' he said, 'you won't get much. Moon ain't leaving much.'

" 'Tut-tut, Tom,' I admonished, 'that's no way to talk about a good neighbor like Sam.'

"We stopped to talk a minute, Tom and I, and he declared that his stuff that had been rounded up with Moon's was turning out short—most of it was Moon's. He had expected to brand at least three hundred calves there, but hadn't branded more than fifty. On the other hand, Moon was branding four-fifths of the stuff in that special round-up, and it was closer to Tandy's range than to Moon's. Of course, it was evident that Tandy's cattle were just not around there, but to him it looked like a short calf crop, and he even asserted that Moon had branded several of his, Tandy's, calves.

"That was absurd, but you know, Jack, how mean-tempered and suspicious a man can get on his blue days when his investments seem to be failing and the weather is cold and mean. Tandy was hungry; his face was streaked with grime; and he kept trying to gouge dust out of his eyes. He wasn't himself—just made grouchy by hard work and worry. We joined the others pretty soon—Moon, Slim Acers and your brother. Moon came up and shook hands, but he was short and gruff too—worried with the hard work and the weather. You know what it was like; you were with them some that day."

Jack Quackenlaw nodded in assent. He remembered the day well; it was one of the meanest he had in memory.

"My arrival was an excuse for them to stop in their hurry to snatch a bite of dinner. The four of them filled their tin plates from the pot of fresh beef and beans over the cook-fire and got coffee. They invited me to help myself.

" 'Dish up something,' Sam insisted. 'When a man partakes at my table I take it he's going to do right by me. So before you go to buy my yearlings I'd like for you to eat with me.'

"I took this for just jolly talk, until I noticed that Tandy immediately fell into a sullen spell, and I wondered if Moon could have been aiming a shaft at his neighbor. It was Moon's chuck-wagon. I helped myself and squatted around the fire with them. The men ate ravenously. It was a hard day on tempers, and waiting till nearly three o'clock to eat was hard on stomachs.

" 'You see some of my stuff, riding up?' Tandy asked.

"I nodded.

" 'What you pay for it?'

"Six and a half," I said. "It's in poor condition.'

"The two ranch-owners looked at me quickly, and Moon's eyes danced angrily. He didn't say a word, which showed how angry he was.

" 'That ain't seven and a half,' Tandy remarked sullenly. 'Six and a half won't pay me out—not with me being so short on calves.' He cast a nasty look across at Moon.

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" 'I ain't stealin' your calves,' Moon said with heavy, slow wrath.

"Tandy did not answer or laugh to soften his words. Your brother Lafe, I noticed, got up and sat down a little closer to his employer, Moon, and gave his scabbard free room as he squatted again. He and Slim eyed one another, as if making notes for coming trouble. You know how cowboys used to be—loyal as soldiers."

Jack nodded again.

"I didn't know there was such harsh feeling between them. There wasn't when I left," he remarked.

"No; but in the meantime Tandy had seen most of the stuff turning out to be Moon's when he had expected to brand more. And then there was that miserable weather. Tandy picked on me next.

" 'You buyers,' said he, 'expect to get something for nothing. I thought you was fairer than the others. Talk about eatin' at a man's table and treatin' him fair afterward—you ate at my house didn't you?'

" 'Tom,' I returned, trying to keep the edge off my voice, 'your stuff ain't worth more than six and a half, way the market is.'

" 'Ner mine either, eh?' Moon asked.

" 'Nor yours either,' I returned.

" 'You are a —— robber,' Tandy declared, throwing his empty plate into the dust with a savage motion.

" 'That's no way to talk, Tom,' I expostulated.

" 'You ain't talkin' right either,' Moon broke in. 'Stuff's worth more than six and a half. It's been costly this season, what with the drought, and at six and a half I stand to lose.'

"Maybe the miserable day was having its effect on me. Anyway, this talk riled me. I had always been fair, and I was fair then. As a matter of fact, their stuff, after they were dead, went to other buyers for just what I offered. So I flew up a little.

" 'Six and a half,' I said, 'take it or leave it. And be careful about how you call a man a robber. Somebody might not like it.'

" 'You're right there,' Moon observed, casting a sidelong glance at Tandy.

"THEY swallowed their last bite and went back to work at once. Lafe and Slim rode into the bunch at the edge of the rincon and cut out two cows and a calf. One cow bore the Moon Handle brand, and the other the Bar-and-Circle, They waited to see which one the calf would take to, and the little fellow headed toward Moon's cow.

" 'Mine,' said Sam, picking up his branding-iron and laying it in the refurbished fire to heat.

" 'Hold on!' Tandy cautioned. 'Give yourself a chance to be honest. That's my calf.'

"Indeed, the calf had changed its mind and ran over toward Tom's cow and there stopped, seeming to hesitate. Lafe was standing a few rods back of Tom's cow, on his horse. He whistled shrilly and the calf scampered back toward Sam's cow, but didn't go up to her.

" 'If your —— man wouldn't drive my calves away from my cows,' Tandy grated, 'I'd brand more calves.' He picked up his running-iron and laid it in the fire to heat. 'That's my calf,' he declared.

" 'Men,' I said, thinking to make peace, 'drive them away from the herd and give the calf a chance to choose its mother. Settle it for sure.

" 'Your advice ain't been asked for,' Moon hinted heavily.

" 'The sooner you go the better I'll like it,' Tandy declared.

" 'And stay away until you can be honest in your offers,' Moon ordered, mean, just mean, from the cold and Tandy's quarreling.

"Neither man was himself; so without another word I mounted my horse and rode off. A little distance away I looked back and saw your brother roping the calf. That meant, likely, Moon would try to brand it in spite of Tandy's protests. 'There'll be serious trouble,' I said to myself."

"I can see how it was," Quackenlaw admitted, leaning forward in his chair and resting his arms across the polished mahogany desk.

"Yes," Lord went on. "A mile or two away from the camp I came into a good many cattle heading for the shelter of the hills. They carried both Moon's and Tandy's brands, and they looked better than any I had seen. They were coming from the low land, where grazing had been better and were worth more than six and a half. I turned aside and rode into the hills. What I saw had something to do with my deciding to return and make them a bit better offer.

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You see, I had known both men a long time and I hated to part from them in anger.

"I wanted to be fair. And maybe something that Tandy called out to me as I was leaving had something to do with my deciding to offer them six-seventy. Tandy called out that two others buyers were expected to come along that afternoon. So I turned back. Maybe that was it—maybe it was selfishness that took me back, Jack. I want to be absolutely honest with you in telling this. Maybe I wanted to make sure of those yearlings and calves, but at the time I thought it was because I wanted to be friendly.

"Well, when I got back to the branding-place—you know what I saw, for you saw the same thing. The four men lay on the ground. I thought at first they were all dead The calf lay there hog-tied, and Tandy's running-iron was in the fire yet, while Moon's iron was by the calf. That told the story. Moon had started to brand it, and Tandy or Slim had used a gun.

"A feeling of disgust swept over me. Four men dead over one calf! In the horror of it I called it murder, and on the thought I seized the running-iron, kindled the fire, and branded the calf with that word.

"When I had finished and stood there wondering what I should do, your brother groaned. I ran to him and gave him water. I tried to get him to talk, but he was too far gone. It was just then that I heard yip-yapping around a hill, and I knew somebody was coming. It was you, Jack, but I didn't know it then.

"Fear took hold of me. 'What if it is those other cattle-buyers,' I thought. 'If they came, Moon and Tandy told them about their quarreling with me! I'll be charged with this murder.' You see, the influence of the word I had branded was over me. I was in a panic. I jumped on my horse and rode away. Around a hill I looked back and saw you just coming into sight. I dodged out of sight, and the rest of that afternoon I rode around alone, in deadly fear that you, or some one, would follow me and charge me with the killing.

"Fear! My senses deserted me and I was no more than a wild man. But later I calmed down and started for Bafton. Then it was that I ran across you on the road."

"Why didn't you tell me then?" Jack asked.

"I was afraid to, partly, and ashamed to, when you said you had found Lafe alive. I deserted him, you see, and I was ashamed to confess it. And afraid, too. I think I would have told it all the next day; but that killing in the saloon happened right before our eyes, and if I had spoken up I could have prevented that, no doubt. Afterward I didn't have the courage to tell what I knew and take the blame. I see now, also, that I was still in fear that I might be accused.

"It's queer about that brand, too," Lord went on thoughtfully. "With that loathsome brand the calf seemed to me to be a plague on the country, a damnable unclean thing for a man to turn loose. I was afraid I would be blamed and censured for that. Then too, if it were known, it would be my public accusation that either Moon or Tandy had committed murder. I didn't want Mrs. Moon or Mrs. Tandy to think that I held that opinion. It would have cut them deeply. So I just kept silence—through fear. I went to Bafton to tell the whole story once, and an incident came up that stopped me in the midst of it—the killing of Cleve Botts. I had started my confession when the shot was fired."

"I never heard of that," Jack commented.

"Now," Lord said, "it's all told. I am glad of it. The telling, somehow, seems to —seems to take away a stain on me. That branded steer—I'll lend you all the money you need, Jack, if you will give me that steer for security."

"What will you do with it?"

"Have it shot and burned to ashes over a fire! Put that old crime and that old fear of mine, too, into the dust of the past!"

"You can have him!" Jack said with a glad smile. "I was afraid maybe you had shot Lafe. I am glad you didn't, Mr. Lord."

They shook hands with iron grips.

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SUNLESS SEAS

A Complete Novelette

by

SAMUEL ALEXANDER WHITE

Author of "The Trail of the Rabiscaws," "The Seigniory of the Sea," etc.

CHAPTER I

THE LAW OF TREASURE-TROVE

CAPTAIN FREDERICK FARNHAM, skipper of the Gloucester schooner *Wave Gleam*, which had disposed of her fare and renewed her outfit in the harbor of St. Pierre, stared at the notice posted on the Quay de la Ronciere, where his vessel lay moored. The notice was in the form of a placard printed in English and French, and in bold, black type it read:

Under the law of France which demands two-thirds of all treasure-trove discovered in the St. Pierre-Miquelon archipelago, the Government of the Islands has decided to conduct a search on the Miquelon Dunes shore inhabited by Philip Marne and his daughter Marguerite Marne. Long suspected, it has now been definitely established that treasure actually lies secreted on said shore in some place unknown to the Government and that Philip Marne has been disposing annually of the same in Europe, exchanging coinage of gold of an ancient date for notes of the Bank of France.

Therefore the search, although, in the event of discovery, the Government does not desire to confiscate the whole. All the Government wishes is its just share under the law, the rest being offered to seekers as an incentive to search. Thus it is hereby announced to all who may wish to participate that at midnight on the fourteenth of July the Dunes shore of Miquelon, whereon reside Philip Marne and his daughter Marguerite Marne, will be searched publicly under the supervision of one of the patrol cruisers, finders of treasure to retain one-third, the remaining two-thirds to pass to the Government.

Searching vessels will sail from St. Pierre harbor under stated rules, and rules and the course for said vessels will be given out at the date of search.

It was an amazing placard, and yet it was quite in keeping with what he had heard of Marne, man of mystery and wealth, scholar and gentleman, who had built a fifty-thousand-franc palace in St. Pierre, but who seldom lived in it, spending most of his time on his yearly visits to the islands in a rambling house he owned on Miquelon's Dunes. Farnham had never seen him or his daughter, but he had heard scores of rumors concerning them. So often had the names of the island *Monte Cristo* and his beautiful, refined daughter rung in his ears that he seemed to know them with a visionary knowledge.

Whether there was anything in the rumors he had not known before. Some said that Marne had made his fortune out of the cod-fishing industry in the barren island outpost. Others asserted that he was connected secretly with the smugglers of the Newfoundland Banks, for he was intimate with Victor Platte, the notorious contraband-trading captain. While still others declared darkly that he had unearthed treasure on Miquelon.

And these last were right! Treasure of Miquelon that Farnham had always deemed a myth was real. At some time or other Philip Marne had found it, and, rather than share two-thirds of it with the watch-

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ful Government if he lifted it in bulk, he had carried away a portion of it secretly every year to Europe to exchange for notes of the Bank of France. This was a logical explanation of Marne's well-known pilgrimages across the Atlantic.

Every Winter, Farnham knew, he and his daughter spent in Europe, returning to St. Pierre in the Summer and leaving it again at the close of the fishing in the Fall. They were accustomed to living in luxury and they traveled the same way, crossing by the luxurious ocean liners to Halifax or Sydney and coming on to St. Pierre by the island steamer *St. Pierre-Miquelon.*

The *St. Pierre-Miquelon* arrived every other Thursday. She was due now, as the cathedral clock was striking two, for Farnham could hear her whistling in the entrance, and, as he watched the snub-nosed, reinforced-bowed, rusty-funneled, ice-fighting steamer plow through the harbor, he wondered if Philip Marne and his daughter were aboard.

A score of passengers disembarked on the wharf among the crowd of St. Pierrais who cheered lustily at the arrival of the vessel with their cherished mail. Farnham could not associate any of the score with his conception of the Marnes, but to make sure he accosted the whiskered French sea-captain who piloted the *St. Pierre-Miquelon.*

"Did the Marnes not sail with you this trip?" he asked.

"They usually do, but not this time," answered the *St. Pierre-Miquelon's* captain. "You see they are among the twelve hundred passengers on the French liner *Tramontane*, crippled on the Banks."

"By Jove, is that so? What's the matter with the *Tramontane?*"

"She broke her shaft and contrary gales forced her there. She's at anchor amid heavy ice. A passing fishing-schooner from Newfoundland brought the word to land."

"Did the schooner give her position?" demanded Farnham.

"Yes," informed the captain; "when spoken, the *Tramontane* was just north of the Halifax to Liverpool steamship track and about longitude fifty-four. We heard no more over the cable. A steamer put out from St. John's to search for her, but there's no telling where she has drifted."

"No telling," agreed Farnham, "but she's pretty sure to go gulfwards, towards the Gulf of St. Lawrence."

"I should judge so," the captain nodded. "Very likely she will cross Jerseyman and Miquelon Banks."

"And there's no telling, either, when she will make a port," Farnham pondered gravely. "Nothing certain and the fourteenth of July only a couple of weeks away! Look at that notice! I wonder if the Marnes have been duly notified by the Government?"

He pointed to the placard, copies of which were exposed conspicuously all about the wharf. The whiskered captain of the *St. Pierre-Miquelon* read the print unmoved.

"How do I know?" he shrugged, turning indifferently away. "I run the *St. Pierre-Miquelon* through gale and ice and fog. That is my business and this treasure-hunting is not."

"Nor is it your business, Captain Farnham. Take my advice and don't meddle with it!" spoke a Gallic tongue behind the Gloucester man.

Farnham wheeled on the quay to stare into the lean, brown, sinister face of Victor Platte, shaggy-throated, scarlet-belted, wooden-saboted Platte, the intimate, so rumor said, of Philip Marne. By far the most famous alien who sailed the Newfoundland Banks, born originally an Isle aux Chiens beach boy but now captain of the brigantine *St. Julien*, commanding a crew of seventy-four St. Malouins, Platte was ostensibly a trawler. But Farnham knew that he was in reality a smuggler, with St. Pierre as his headquarters, and king of a trade that brought the island port a secret revenue of one million dollars a year.

Strange cargoes for a Banker the *St. Julien* carried. Platte had honeycombed the Banks and riddled the North Atlantic coasts with her trade, and he had the distinction of being the target of the clause in the Anglo-Gallic treaty wiping French territorial rights off the Treaty Shore that stipulated the appointment of a British consul in St. Pierre.

It was to kill Platte and his illicit traffic, connived at by the Government, that the British held out for the appointment of a consul in spite of the opposition of the Quay d'Orsay. But, as yet unslaughtered, Platte flourished as lusty and free as the sea-winds that drove his brigantine.

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FARNHAM had never liked the near-brigand. Of late he had fallen foul of him several times on the Grand Banks, ordering him off his vessel when he came in the guise of an ocean caller to ply his unsavory trade, so that open enmity blazed between them whenever they happened to meet. Now it needed only Platte's impudent words, the vicious slant of his crafty black eyes, the sullen uplift of his bristling mustache under the snaky hand that stroked it, to rouse Farnham's latent antagonism.

"What do you know about my business, Platte?" he challenged. "I meddle with any lawful thing that suits me. And since you're so free with your tongue, maybe you can tell me what the captain of the *St. Pierre-Miquelon* couldn't tell me, eh? Have the Marnes on the *Tramontane* been notified of the date of this search?"

"Yes," grinned Platte; "but they are marooned, you see!"

"And who informed the Government?"

"I did!"

"The devil!" exclaimed Farnham. "I understood you were a friend of Marne's, yes, more than a friend—in fact, a suitor of Miss Marne's."

"I was a friend of Marne's, but not now," enlightened Platte. "I was a suitor of Marguerite's, and I am still. Why," the sudden flame of chagrin which his vanity could not brook reddening his swarthy cheeks, "the proud cat laughed me to scorn when I asked her hand in marriage!"

"So you informed to get revenge?" sneered Farnham.

"No, not to get revenge, but to win my suit! With all her wealth she laughed, but without a franc she will not laugh. You understand? She will get it all back when she loses some of her pride. For, mark me, Captain Farnham, though yours and one thousand other vessels enter the race on the fourteenth, the *St. Julien* is the ship that takes the gold from Miquelon. I had looked for Marne's competition as well. I had not bargained for this whim of the seas that holds the *Tramontane* fast on the Banks, but I like it fine.

"It makes the treasure doubly certain for me! The Government's two-thirds share? Ha! Ha! Don't ever think the Government will get a sou. With the loot of a million dollars in her hold the *St. Julien* will fade away for Europe, and St. Pierre will know Victor Platte no more."

"Don't be too sure," Farnham advised him. "My *Wave Gleam* is a better ship than your *St. Julien*, and she's manned by better men. And, anyway, Marne is the man who has the best chance of lifting his own loot. It's beyond doubt that the Government knew that and took this way of forcing his hand on your testimony. The accident to the *Tramontane* was unforeseen. Otherwise Marne would have been there at the Government's notification to look after his own, and, if there's any way of bringing him in to St. Pierre before the fourteenth, he should be brought."

Platte's crafty black eyes ceased slanting and glared straight into Farnham's.

"Do you mean you intend to bring Marne in?" he bellowed.

"Sure," nodded Farnham coolly. "I'm fishing on Jerseyman Bank. I'm bound there this minute, and, if I sight the *Tramontane*, I'll certainly offer to bring Marne and his daughter in. I don't know them personally, but I've more than an idle interest in them. You've done underhand work against them, and you're gloating over the fix that puts them out of the search. See? There's fairness and equality in things, and I'll try my condemnedest to bring them in."

"By the virgin, then you'll never board your *Wave Gleam!*" roared Platte. "I'll crack your limbs and cripple you on the quay!"

He leaped at Farnham as he spoke, his long snaky arms, strong as pythons, outstretched to put his threat into execution. But the Gloucester man's fist crashed straight between his crafty black eyes. Platte reeled from the force of the blow, his writhing arms grasping only air, and under the guard of those arms Farnham dodged low and caught him about the waist. A heave and a half-turn of his great frame and he whirled Platte off his feet, off the quay and down into the harbor water and slime.

"Cripple away!" he invited with a grim laugh as he jumped aboard his schooner and shouted for his crew to tumble up from below.

From their stowing of the last gear and provisions for the outward run on the Banks, they tumbled up at his shout and laid ready hands to the sheets.

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"Hoist the fore and mainsails!" Farnham ordered. "Hoist lively, there. I'll take the wheel myself."

He ran swiftly aft to take the spokes.

The canvas rose at his word, and, as it fluttered and drew, the *Wave Gleam* heeled over and left the Quay de la Ronciere. She passed Platte to starboard, hauling his slimed self out of the harbor water on to a French fishing-skiff, and at the sight Farnham could not forbear to hail him in farewell.

"Cripple away, Platte!" he saluted again, laughing and waving his hand from the wheel of the heeling schooner. "I'm bound for Jerseyman Bank!"

CHAPTER II

THE CRIPPLED *TRAMONTANE*

THE St. Pierre-Miquelon archipelago lay between the C. P. R. steamship track from Quebec to Liverpool and the south coast of Newfoundland, eight desolate, sterile eruptions of rock that formed the world's most famous fishing outpost. The front door of Canada and the side door of Newfoundland, its wave-worn shores sentineled both the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Fortune Bay.

Great Brunet and Little Brunet lay well within the embrace of Fortune Bay, while straggling farther out sprawled the main islands Great Miquelon, Little Miquelon and St. Pierre, together with the lesser islets that were hardly more than dangerous rocks. Midway of the thirty miles that separated Great Miquelon from the Newfoundland coast was Jerseyman Bank, a drawn-out oval of fishing shoal that extended from the line of Cape Miquelon on the island's tip to the line of the Dunes, where the narrowing of the tide-inundated sands formed Langlade or Little Miquelon.

This was Farnham's berth, within easy sailing reach of St. Pierre, although he did not make it at once. There was a fog on the town when he left, and off the Enfant Perdu it thickened so as to compel him to anchor for a day. Near Great Colombier he had to anchor again, losing two more days, during which time they fished from the deck with good success. So the *Wave Gleam* was four days out of St. Pierre before he could drop a trawl line on Jerseyman Bank, and it was evening of the fifth day of intermittent, shifting fog that the ice-field for which he was on the lookout appeared as, single-handed, he hauled a mile of trawl on his trawl line's end.

He lay seven miles down-wind from the *Wave Gleam*, a great west wind that rolled a great sea before it, and he had just coiled the last of the trawl in the tub when he looked up to see the bank of mist to leeward blown out and the shining white ice in its place. It was a vast field of one hundred square miles or more. From his low vision-point it seemed to Farnham that the whole ocean was covered with bergs and floes at rest, but the slow motion of the grinning, white-toothed floes past him told him that the drift was southerly. He stood up in his pitching dory to scan the field, and one glance showed him the long hulk of a liner lying anchored in the ice-masses perhaps five miles from the edge of the field.

The *Tramontane!* He could recognize her even amid transforming ice. Two-funneled, four-masted, she loomed, flags from every mast-tip and flags at bow and stern, with her twelve hundred stranded passengers blackening her decks and overflowing on the tightly jammed floes. They had apparently sighted his schooner sooner than he had sighted their ship, for those nearest came running to the edge of the floes to hail him.

"Ahoy! Dory, ho! Hi, there!" they yelled in a strange sailor-landsman medley. "Take a message from the crippled *Tramontane!*"

"The word's ashore already," Farnham assured them. "The Newfoundland schooner brought it, and a steamer left St. John's to look for you. Haven't you sighted her?"

The passengers shook their heads.

"You should, some of these days—if the fog stays away. Who's that man running among you?"

He could see them giving way to a man in a brown ulster who speeded from the rear of the crowd till he reached the edge of the outside floe and eagerly beckoned him. Farnham drove his dory in the lee of a small growler and, watching his chance, made fast momentarily at the man's feet.

"Philip Marne is my name," the man answered for himself. "It is very important that I reach St. Pierre at this chance. Can I take passage on your schooner?

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I'll pay you anything you name. If you're Banks-bound I'll charter——"

"No, you won't, Mr. Marne," interrupted Farnham. "You won't pay anything, but I'll take you to St. Pierre all the same. In fact, that was partly the reason I came out here—to see if I could find you."

"You did?" demanded Marne, shaking hands in gratitude mingled with amazement. "Then who are you, sir, to seek me in mid-ocean?"

"Frederick Farnham, skipper of the Gloucester schooner *Wave Gleam*," enlightened Farnham, nodding up-wind. "I heard about the *Tramontane* in St. Pierre. I heard, too, a boast of Victor Platte's that he would be the finder in the Miquelon search on the fourteenth."

"Oh, he boasted that, did he?" cried Marne, his scholarly face hardening. "The cursed informer!"

"When he heard you were stranded on the liner, he thought he had the thing all in his own hands, but I wanted you to have your seeker's chance with the rest."

"By heavens, then the spirit of fairness is in you, Captain Farnham!" beamed Marne suddenly. "Yes; and it is a great generosity to come out of your way to do me this service!"

"I didn't come out of my way," deprecated Farnham. "Your ice-field came past me, as it were. You see, the fourteenth is not far away, and it's just a chance if the *Tramontane* can get out of this ice before that. If help doesn't reach her, she may have to slip her cables and drift south with the field till the Gulf Stream frees her. On my schooner you're practically certain of making port in short order, and I have plenty of room for you and your daughter. I understand she is with you."

"Yes, yes, she is here, and we are both very, very glad of your offer," declared Marne swiftly. "It is a case of leaving one's baggage and embarking at once, I suppose. Can you hold on till I find Marguerite? All right; I won't be many seconds."

Marne darted into the crowd of figures straggling over the floes and presently appeared running with a girl on his arm.

"My daughter, Marguerite, Captain Farnham!" he panted in introduction as he reached the dory.

A GODDESS of gold in a world of arctic white she glowed in Farnham's eyes, golden-stockinged, golden-gowned, all shimmering under the elusive sun. And the coiled hair on her head, peeping from under her steamer-cap, vied in sheen with the gleaming satin of her dress. Tall and finely sculptured, the lines of her figure swept soft and full—like the plastic curve of the waves to Farnham, so inviting, so entrancing—while her shapely neck, dimpling in its sumptuousness, shone white as eddied foam where she had thrown her fur-lined cloak open in her running.

Her eyes, unlike her father's, were gray, a rare, wonderful gray, comparable only to moon-shot mist or sun-dappled spray. Farnham, gazing fairly into them, felt himself engulfed as by the majesty of the deep. She had an iron-tipped walking-stick of her father's in her hands and, as she gave it to Farnham, she gracefully gave him her hands with it.

"I, too, wish to thank you for hailing us, Captain Farnham," she greeted warmly. "Men pass lightly over things like this, but it is given for women to appreciate their true significance. You have done my father and me a service we can't repay."

"I am repaid already, Miss Marne," laughed Farnham, pressing her hands. "It's worth a good deal more trouble than I've taken to see you in such a mid-ocean scene as this."

He waved a hand over the glittering, stupendous field of floes and bergs, but his eyes remained on her. Subtly she knew the compliment was meant for her personally, nor did she show herself averse to accepting it from the clean-cut, six-foot Gloucester man who stood out like a bronze statue in his dory on the edge of the ice floe.

"Thank you, Captain Farnham," she nodded, coloring slightly and allowing her own eyes to wander commendingly over his brown hair, his face of ocean-tan, his wide-set eyes of hazel shade that darkened to dun or glowed to amber according as gravity or mirth lay upon his masculinely-chiseled, handsome features; "thank you! Are you going to row to your schooner?"

"No—too much sea," he told her as he handed her into the dory after her father. "Yonder's the end of my trawl line and the place where I just hauled my own section. We'll anchor in that location before the

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drift of the ice takes us farther south and wait for the *Wave Gleam* to drop down on us."

He turned to the rest of the curious passengers before shoving off.

"Anybody else like to go to St. Pierre?" he demanded with a buoyant laugh.

They all shook their heads. Their destination was not St. Pierre, nor did they prefer a pitching Banks schooner to the stable, though stationary, decks of the liner.

CHAPTER III

ON THE TRAWL LINE'S END

RIDING to his dory roding taut on the anchor, his steering oar in the stern becket sculling the flat-bottomed Banks skiff bow-on to the rolling seas, Farnham waited with his two passengers and watched the race between his schooner *Wave Gleam* and the swift Atlantic fog that threatened once more to drop down. There was nothing else for the three to do but wait. Farnham could not row the dory against the irresistible surge and tide, and, if he pulled up his anchor, the boat would immediately drift off to leeward far beyond the *Wave Gleam's* reach.

Last boat of the seven-mile trawl line looped across the troubled ocean, they would be picked up last of all, and in the anxious meantime they watched with lightening eyes the *Wave Gleam's* eager work. She was a splendid vessel, a seventy-ton Banks schooner of the very newest design. Her crew was a splendid crew, old Zachary Grey and his seven sons whose names began with the first seven letters of the alphabet. Eight tried men of Gloucester were they, the cream of the old port's deep-water sailors, and Farnham prided himself on the ability of both crew and ship.

As the dory poised on the crest of a twenty-foot roller, they could glimpse the schooner across a multitude of water mountains, heaving high against a murky sky, now driving on alone, now luffing up with a chip of a dory fast to her side. The chip would disappear with the uplift of a sea, slung inboard on the boat tackles, and the schooner would bear down-wind on the next.

Farnham knew by the way she was handled that Zachary was at the wheel. The man was old beyond the fisher's span. His shoulders were too stiff for the heavy swing and heave of the trawl work, and his joints were caked through years of immersion in the brine. So it was Farnham's custom when fishing big and hauling single-handed to let Zachary do the navigating while he himself went off in the dories with the sons for the hauling of the trawls. Abraham, Benjamin, Charles, David, Ebenezer, Felix and George were lusty enough for the toil, grown men all, except George who, only sixteen, remained aboard with his father as cook and spare hand when the shifting of the sails demanded it and the boats were to be picked up.

Both old Zachary and young George had their work cut out for them at this moment, to gather in the chicks of the mother vessel. Farnham thought the old man must be secretly satisfied that he had not more sons. In his younger days it had been his avowed intention to obey the Scriptural injunction about multiplying the earth and to go through the alphabet from A to Z, but somehow he had never got beyond G. If he had been more successful, Farnham humorously wondered how he would have picked them up now before the fog swallowed them.

The *Wave Gleam* was not alone. All around her for many miles other ships were darting on the same errand about the Newfoundland Banks, picking up their dories before the silent, ominous fog should trap them on the treacherous squall-lashed sea. Amid the host of vessels Farnham saw the modern knockabout rigs of his home ports, alien Newfoundland schooners with tall topmasts and here and there a square-rig that marked the brigantine of France. Nor did men prefer their own vessels under the menace that advanced. With the edge of the fog bank upon them he observed several fishers on far-flung trawl lines up-anchor and drift down on the nearest ship to leeward.

It mattered not to them whether their haven hailed from some far outport hundreds of miles removed from their own. They thought only of getting their feet safely upon a deck once more, and next day—or next week, it might be—they could sort out their own vessel from the horde upon the Newfoundland Banks.

This was Farnham's own thought, but no friendly sail upon which he could depend

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slanted close to leeward. Ships there were to leeward of him, schooners, square-rigs, small as toy ships against the mountainous waters and the floating, cliff-like bergs, but they were dwarfed by the distance, miles further away from him than was his own schooner *Wave Gleam*. It was madness to risk boarding one of them, and, as for the haven of the *Tramontane*, it was gone from them in the southerly drift that left behind only an impregnable barrier of bergs.

Therefore the three could only wait without a chance to cut and run for safety from the approaching fog. Every moment Farnham regretted the presence of the girl whom he had drawn into a position that had suddenly become perilous, but he was careful to speak no word of the danger to her or to her father. Inexperienced, they did not seem to realize the danger. They seemed to trust him fully; so he hung on grimly, doggedly, with nothing but the strength of his dory roding between them and the tossing chaos of the elements.

CHAPTER IV

ADRIFT ON THE BANKS

THE *Wave Gleam* was swift, but the fog was swifter. It puffed across the angry gray-white ocean like the rolling pall that heralds the forest-fire on land. Behind it banked a weird wall of darkness over the westering sun, a wall broken by the sunset's flaming rifts, and in the shifts of the wind molten shafts of color struck through and painted the hurrying ships and the watery waste with riotous hues.

Sheer dikes of sapphire Farnham beheld the mountainous surges rise. Bottomless pits of opal he saw the hollows sink. While over the barrels of the swells ran a marvelous glow: purple and carmine and vermilion, quivering and changing, like the sheen of shot silk or the iridescent smear of oil.

Strangely it glowed to Farnham, marveling to see so much marine beauty on the grim black edge of death, before the closer roll of the fog bank shut out ships, sky and sea. His *Wave Gleam* was the last schooner to fade in the sulfur murk. Close to windward Farnham caught her silhouetted for a moment picking up boat number six, the boat containing Felix Grey. Then the mist enfolded her, swept on and engulfed him so thickly that he was compelled to peer sharply for the rising seas.

In all probability, he thought, old Zachary had glimpsed him when he picked up Felix, even as he had glimpsed the schooner before the fog dropped down. Zachary had Farnham's direction in a vague way, and with the tin horn that always rested in the dory the schooner's captain could give his position definitely.

He reached out one hand for the horn, but the hand stopped midway. Under him the dory gave a vicious unlooked-for glide. He was down in the trough instead of on the top of a sea, and all in a flash he wallowed up and down, up and down half a dozen times, the steering oar all but wrenched from his grip and the boat half full of water.

Instantly he sensed what had happened. The strained dory roding had parted. There under his staring eyes was the short end of it trailing in the foam. Back yonder somewhere under the fog-smoked deep was his anchor, and here he was wildly careering from the spot where the *Wave Gleam* had last sighted him.

Through a mishap earlier in the day he had no second anchor to let go. Nor could he complete his move of taking the horn and blowing a blast to indicate to the *Wave Gleam* his changed position. His hand fell instinctively to the bailer instead, and all he could do was to bellow a puny shout into the brawl of the seas as he flung out the shipped water with one hand and steered the boat on to the heads of the mountainous waves with the other.

It was desperate work to clear her. Half the time in his steep plunges he shipped once more what he bailed out in his dizzy ascents. As he worked, he shouted. But through the shrieking squall that followed on the heels of the fog came no answering hail from the schooner. After a quarter of an hour's continuous effort he had the dory practically clear. The next plunge into the trough of the rollers might fill it again. So he seized the opportunity to lighten the craft.

First he salvaged the horn and gripped it in his mouth to leave his hand free for work. Overside he tipped the trawl tub with the trawl he had hauled. Overside, back to the depths that had yielded them up, went the fish he had taken. Strewing

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the waves spun everything except the horn in his mouth and the bailer in his hand.

The dory rode much lighter, but Farnham knew it could not ride long. In that terrific sea that was making all the while, small craft might not live. Even larger craft were in dread danger, for momentarily in the clammy void lurked the menace of the ice floes and the impregnable walls of the bergs.

For his own boat he knew it was only a matter of minutes if he did not get within hail of some schooner that would take them aboard. He was constantly sculling on to wave-heads, poising on high and shooting down sheer liquid slopes. Every time he dipped he shipped water. Some one of the toboggan plunges would shortly fill the dory so that she would not rise.

Desperately, yet wholly composed and with all the cool celerity of the methodical seaman, he fought his minutes, steering, blowing, bailing as through the oblivion of the fog pall, haunted with its hidden menaces, he drifted with his two passengers he knew not how far to leeward.

CHAPTER V

ANY SHIP IN A STORM

R-RUMPH-H-H! Without warning a vast trumpet-blast shivered the fog in answer to Farnham's tinny hoot. Like the roar of some leviathan it sounded in the clammy void. He caught the lift of red headsails through the mist, discerned the phantom-filled deck of a brigantine with her tall raked masts and mainsail fore-and-aft. Lustily he blew and steered for her side, throwing down the horn to hail her.

"Dory adrift here!" he shouted. "Stand by with a rope, will you? We're going to board you."

Somebody gave orders in French. He could hear them backing the topsails. The next moment the dory bumped her side. A rope lashed across Farnham's chest.

"Quick, Miss Marne!" he cried.

His practised hands looped it under her armpits, under Marne's, under his own in a triple loop.

"All together—haul!" he roared at the brigantine.

There was a great heave on the rope as the bumping dory rose on the crest of a wave, and with a flying leap the three landed among a knot of hairy, red-capped Frenchmen upon the brigantine's deck. The dory was stove in a final crash. It sank like a stone, but the three stood safe enough, dripping spray and listening to the congratulations of the volatile gesticulating crew.

"By the grace of God, you blew in time," chattered the man who had given orders about the topsails, "or you would not have boarded us. A lady, too, eh? What ship are you from?"

Farnham whirled from his unlooping of the rope at the sound of the voice, leaning forward and scanning the man's swarthy face by the dim glow of the vessel's lights.

"By heavens—Platte!" he gritted suddenly.

"Platte, Victor Platte?" echoed Marguerite. "But it can't be."

"It is," declared her father harshly, leaning and staring as Farnham had done. "Platte, I thought you were doing a despicable informer's work in St. Pierre. What the devil brings you on the Banks in this fog?"

"Tell me first what brings you three aboard my brigantine in this fog," countered Platte, fighting for time in his surprise.

"Any fool would know," snapped Farnham. "You see I spoke the *Tramontane* as I promised. As for the rest, the tricky weather did it. We were waiting for the *Wave Gleam* on my trawl line when our dory roding broke and the schooner missed us in the fog. What about yourself? I suppose you sneaked out of St. Pierre after me to try to prevent me finding the liner if you could?"

"Why, no," lied Platte, gulping down his disconcertment and recovering his daredevil poise. "I was simply trawling as usual." He swaggered from the hips as he waved a hand over the wild crowd on the brigantine's deck. "See there my crew of the Banks, seventy-four as lusty St. Malouins as ever baited a trawl!"

"That's a fine fiction," flashed Marguerite. "They are seventy-four lusty men, I know, but they don't frequent the Banks to bait any trawls. Rather, they dispose of your cargoes of contraband among the American, Canadian and Newfoundland fleets that fish these fog-bound waters. You see, Captain Platte, an intimate

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knowledge of the affairs of one's friends sometimes proves a boomerang."

"Well, well," parleyed Platte, whose wit seemed strained to fight the three, "there is no use bickering on deck in this damp. Let us go below where we can settle our differences in private. I was just sitting down to supper alone when I heard our fog-horn pumping and ran up to see. You must be hungry. Enemies are as human as friends. So come and taste the *St. Julien's* fare. Just a moment, though, till I get the *St. Julien* back on her course."

Platte gave his directions for the maneuvering of the brigantine's sails, spoke to the wheelsman about the course, warned the lookout to keep a sharp watch for drifting ice in the dangerous fog and led them all below to the table he had left.

Farnham gazed with amazed eyes at the smuggler captain's table. With the celerity of stagecraft the scene had shifted with their descent. One moment it was the fog-rimmed deck of the black brigantine and the wild, piratical-looking St. Malouins crowding under the red sails. The next moment it was the amber glow of electric lanterns, battery-fed he supposed, streaming down upon white linen, glittering silver and delicate china that would have done credit to a Paris café.

"By Jove, Platte, you live well!" he exclaimed, nodding over the board spread with its Parisian viands and laden with its wines of France.

"Yes," admitted Platte with a sinister smile. "I am glad I am not ashamed of what I have to offer my storm guests. Sit down on that side, Marguerite. You, there, Philip. And you opposite, Captain Farnham. I will have the steward lay your plates."

MARGUERITE and her father took the indicated places. Farnham went to drop into his chair, but he never reached it. Abruptly there came a shock that shook the brigantine from end to end. The amber lights crashed out. Dishes and table and the four about the table were shot in a heap upon the floor.

Farnham could feel the floor tilting sharply as he clutched blindly for a hand-hold, and amid the rolling débris he found himself shielding within his arms the palpitating figure of Marguerite Marne.

"You, Captain Farnham!" she gasped, identifying him by his oilskins. "What is it? Another ship we've collided with?"

"No, ice—a berg!" deduced Farnham. "The *St. Julien* must have driven right into it."

"Marguerite, where are you? Are you hurt, child?" demanded her father, noisily fighting his way in the darkness from under the ruins of the table.

"No, not hurt! Here, father!" she cried out to him.

"Wait!" implored Marne in a voice so dazed as to suggest a head-blow that had all but stunned him. "Wait till I strike a light!"

"Where's Platte?" demanded Farnham.

"Platte? Oh! Platte is gone," answered Marne hollowly. "He went down with me, but I felt him scramble over me and rush on deck."

"Then we'd better get on deck too!" declared Farnham, rising warily to his feet. "I've got Marguerite, all right. Hurry up, Marne. I can feel the brigantine settling fast by the stern, and, if I guess right, we haven't over a quarter of an hour to get off in the *St. Julien's* boats."

CHAPTER VI

THE FOUNDERING OF THE BRIGANTINE

THE deck of the *St. Julien* was scarcely recognizable as a deck to Farnham as, half-guiding, half-carrying Marguerite, he stumbled across it after Platte and Marne. Buckled and telescoped into an amazing mass of wreckage, her bowsprit snapped and both masts whipped overside, the ice-littered brigantine lay with her nose high upon the ledge of the berg she had struck. The fog bank was passing to the eastward, showing the towered, castellated mass in plain sight under the waxen moon, and Farnham exclaimed aloud at the irony of the sea.

"Almost out of the fog and came to grief on its rim!" he breathed to Marguerite. "In another minute the lookout could have seen."

"But can we get off in this jumble?" she asked anxiously.

"We have to get off—that's all there is about it!" he declared. "We have to find some sort of boat before she goes to pieces."

The lashing squall had passed with the fog. There was little wind left in the clear

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sky, though the ocean swell ran strong, lifting the *St. Julien's* bows free of the ledge and pounding them down again with discordant crashes. Wholly of wooden fabric and built without water-tight compartments, the impact against the berg had smashed her timbers and loosened her every plank.

She had gone to fragments like a deal box. The ledge of the berg was all that was holding her above the wave, and even that was only partial support. She was sinking steadily by the stern almost as fast as Farnham could clamber forward after the other two men.

Ahead of them shuffled the panic-stricken St. Malouins, such a raving mob of fishers as Farnham had never seen. Many of them had gone below after his rescue, and apparently they had been in the act of turning in, for, half-clad, those who had escaped being crushed in their bunks in the collision trampled in their bare feet the litter of ice on the brigantine's splintered deck as they fought their way to the side.

They had no time to launch the boats and, even granted time, nothing from which to launch. Every standing stick of the *St. Julien*—every bit of tackle—was in a wave-drenched snarl overside. Farnham saw them simply seize the available boats like sailors demented, hurl them into the ocean and jump.

Into the boats went no provisions, no water, no blankets, no sails, no oars—nothing at all that was necessary to prolong life, warmth and locomotion on the chill, grim waste of waters. Nothing went in but the half-clad mob of men vaulting over the brigantine's shattered rail down into the jolly-boat, the life-boat, the flat-bottomed dories or into the icy sea. Several Farnham saw jump, splash and never come up. More than a score overturned the dories in their impetuous descent and drowned themselves on the spot. Marguerite cried out in fright as she saw them struggle and disappear.

"The madmen! The madmen!" she censured. "They're only destroying their own chance of escape."

"Yes—and ours," supplemented Farnham. "For they'll have all the boats if we don't be quick. Platte—Platte," raising his voice to the *St. Julien's* captain in the lead, "don't let them strand us on a sinking ship. Look out for a boat for ourselves!"

But Platte was in a worse panic than any of his men. Blind fear had driven him up the stairs. Blind fear pricked him over the side, and without a look back he leaped sheer down into the tossing jolly-boat among a half-dozen of his fellows. The dazed Marne shouted in French after him as he leaped and landed, but Platte paid no heed. Marne, Marguerite and Farnham gained the brigantine's side in time to see the only three boats that floated reeling away to the southeast.

Farnham mechanically counted seven men in the single dory, six men and Platte in the jolly-boat and twenty-one more in the life-boat, all drifting before what wind there was, spinning away into the fog from which the brigantine had just emerged under sail.

Marne, still half-dazed, his hand to his head, could find no words to recall them. He stood speechless by the side, staring incredulously at the trio of boats over which the heavy surge was already splashing, and it was Farnham who hailed them with a full-lunged shout.

"Ho—you, Platte!" he bellowed. "You've left us stranded. Make shift to come back."

PLATTE and the stockingless, half-clad men in his own and the other two boats looked across the heaving waves at his cry, but they could not come back even if their panic had permitted, for they had no oars. They waved their arms and jabbered in French and the next moment vanished in the mist.

"They've deserted us!" exclaimed Marne, as if voicing their predicament for the first time. "They've deserted us, and there isn't so much as a solid hatch aboard."

"Then we have to make something solid mighty quick," asserted Farnham.

"Or try a landing on the berg," proposed Marne. "What do you think, Captain Farnham—is it possible?"

One look at the perpendicular walls and towering ice cliffs had convinced Farnham that it was impossible. No hummocky floe or low growler that might have afforded a temporary haven was this floating arctic mountain, but as stupendous a calving of the Greenland glaciers as Farnham had ever seen. He shook his head with finality.

"It's suicide to try to climb," he stated. "We'll have to lash two or three heavy timbers for a raft. Hold on, though—

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what's that sound? Is there a bell in any of those boats?"

"Not that I saw anything of," declared Marne.

"It's a bell all the same. Can't you hear it?"

They listened in the partial lulls that followed the breaking of the waves on the berg's ledges and the rumbling of the air in its ice caverns. Unmistakably enough a bell was tinkling faintly through the roar of the creaming surf, coming down from the southwest.

"By the good angels of sailormen, it's a schooner!" cried Farnham, shading his eyes in the moon-glare. "It's—it's—nothing less than my *Wave Gleam*. Maybe half a miracle, eh? Maybe old Zachary Grey's shrewd judgment. He's been nursing her along the edge of the fog bank on the chance of picking me up."

"Hello, Frenchy," the nasal voice of Zachary Grey bawled at the dismantled square-rigger; "plumb vitally hit, ain't ye? Heard the cra-ash a mile away."

The schooner was winging in closer, and Farnham could see old Zachary at the wheel with his seven alphabetical sons about the deck.

"Daown with that main-topsail," ordered the old navigator, manipulating his spokes and slanting a green eye across the wreckage.

"Nothing but a bundle o' boards and two seconds to float! Haow many be ye to jump me?"

"Three, Zachary," answered his captain. "Don't faint on the wheel. It's Farnham. The *St. Julien* picked me out of the pond with a couple of passengers from the *Tramontane*."

Zachary's mouth opened so wide in amazement that the moonlight pooled within it in a golden pool, but his hands did not lose their cunning on the wheel. Over the *Wave Gleam's* low rail Philip Marne and Farnham, with Marguerite in his arms, jumped lightly to the deck beside him.

"Where be the rest?" asked the old fellow, putting the schooner over on the other tack to clear the berg.

"Some of them there," informed Marne, gravely pointing to the snarling surf; "some yonder," nodding off into the fog. "No chance of finding them tonight, is there?"

"Not a ghost o' a cha-ance!" decided Zachary. "More cha-ance o' the *Wave Gleam* rammin' one o' them things." He indicated the mountainous mass of ice. "All we kin do is cruise up and daown along the edge o' the fog bank an' try to search 'em aout in the mornin'. There goes the last o' Platte's *St. Julien* naow."

The eyes of every one turned to the ledge of the berg. With a rasping sound the *St. Julien's* bow was slowly sliding off. The vibration seamed the ice cliffs so that they split and toppled down in a hail of ponderous blocks, and amid roar of surf and thunder of ice the brigantine disappeared, taking with her the St. Malouins she had trapped down in the sunless seas.

CHAPTER VII

THE BARREN BEACHES

"WELL, Captain Farnham, it has been a very futile search," observed Marguerite Marne, coming up the companionway and taking her place beside Farnham at the wheel of the *Wave Gleam* as he steered the schooner in from the open sea for Galantry Head on the island of St. Pierre.

"Yes," admitted Farnham. "Seven days of scouring the Banks, speaking bark after bark and schooner after schooner without finding trace or hearing word of the *St. Julien's* boats is what you would call futile. A futile search, Marguerite, but not a futile week!" he added significantly.

"Undoubtedly," she returned with mischievous evasiveness. "A week ago on the *Tramontane* it seemed as if we would be a long time making St. Pierre harbor, and here you are carrying us in on the *Wave Gleam*. Are we nearly there, do you think?"

"Not far off! See that?"

He pointed forward into the half-darkness of the dawn, his arm slanting in a direction that extended over the heads of Marne and the Greys who, pacing the *Wave Gleam's* deck from mainmast to rail, watched the canary forelights of morning gild the sea.

Marguerite's eyes, gazing in the indicated direction, made out a shaft of fire shooting forth through space and flashing two white flashes and one red flash every twenty seconds.

"The flashing light on Galantry Head?" she asked.

Farnham nodded. It was visible for twenty miles, but they were much closer in than that, and only the intermittent fog

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banks made it appear vague and distant. Presently the light ceased flashing, for the dawn was coming up fast, like a crimson-cratered subterranean volcano spouting molten lava across the mauve-hued sky. Straight ahead they glimpsed St. Pierre Island, a barren waste of rock set in a purple sea, and hazily beyond to the northward loomed the grayish-yellow dunes of Little Miquelon.

The fog-horn on Galantry Head shrieked once and wildly at them as they entered the channel and then fell strangely silent.

"Look! There's the town!" exclaimed Marguerite. "And, for a wonder, no fog!"

Not often had Farnham seen it fogless. In the crystal air the rusted battery of ancient cannon that marked the empery of France frowned out starkly. High on the cliffs to the right posed the virgin, while on the hills above the old gray city, built along the edge of a sterile wilderness that rimmed it round, hung the crucified Christ on Calvary.

Through a multitude of fishing vessels—schooners of the islands, barks from the far ports of France—that filled the harbor, Farnham drove the *Wave Gleam*, past the French patrol-cruiser *Man of Breton* lying at anchor and in to the Quay de la Ronciere.

ON THE quay among a crowd of St. Pierrais watching incoming vessels stood Lieutenant Aulnay, commander of the *Man of Breton*, and, at sight of Philip Marne and his daughter aboard the *Wave Gleam*, he stepped swiftly up to the schooner's side where, her sails rattling down, she came to rest at the wharf. He doffed his naval cap politely to Marguerite, standing at Farnham's side on the after-deck, but addressed himself to her father upon the foredeck.

"What has happened now, Marne?" he demanded authoritatively. "I have cabled information that tells me you sailed from France on the *Tramontane*, and here you come in on an American fishing-schooner of the Banks whose captain I don't seem to know."

"Frederick Farnham of Gloucester, Lieutenant Aulnay," introduced Marguerite with a whimsical laugh.

"Now I do know," nodded Aulnay. "I have heard that name on patrol. But," facing Philip Marne again, "where is the crippled *Tramontane?*"

"We left her in the vicinity of Jerseyman Bank," laughed Marne, "and we have been in several craft since then: Farnham's dory, Platte's brigantine *St. Julien* and now the *Wave Gleam.*"

"What's that?" demanded Aulnay quickly. "Where is Platte's brigantine, then?"

"At the bottom of the Atlantic, Aulnay," Marne answered with a shrug of his shoulders, "and that is news your cables could not give you."

"Heavens!" ejaculated the lieutenant in genuine surprize. "Is that so? What wrecked her?"

"We struck a berg at night on the Banks," Philip Marne explained. "It happened that the brigantine had picked up Captain Farnham, my daughter and myself drifting in his dory in the fog. And, when the *St. Julien* came to grief, his *Wave Gleam* was fortunately near enough to come to our aid. Platte and thirty-four men got off in the boats and deserted us on the hulk. Although we put in a week of Christian searching with the *Wave Gleam*, here you see the only survivors as far as we know. Possibly there may be others, but we couldn't search longer. Today is the twelfth, you must remember, and I needed a safe margin to be in port for the fourteenth."

"In the virgin's name, that is disaster!" exclaimed Aulnay, choosing to ignore Marne's sarcastic reference to the date of the month. "How many men did the *St. Julien* carry?"

"Didn't the wily Platte ever tell you?" interjected Farnham, scowling at the lieutenant.

"Not the number, only the composition of his crew!" grinned Aulnay.

"Well, seventy-four as fine St. Malouins as ever smuggled the sea!" Farnham pointedly enlightened.

"You three out of seventy-seven. By the blessed saints, can that be all?"

"All," corroborated Marne, "unless some ship here has picked up the dory, the jolly-boat or the life-boat."

"No ship has landed men here," the lieutenant declared. "As a matter of policy we speak with all the captains that come in, and none of them have mentioned sighting anything."

"Then the chances are they are all lost," declared Marne grimly. "Though I'll have to make sure about Platte before I leave St.

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Pierre. I don't yearn for his presence on Miquelon, you know!"

"You can do as you like about that, only you'll have to be careful of your movements," Aulnay warned.

At the vague threat Farnham saw Marguerite's cheeks flame and her eyes flash. Marne, too, leaned swiftly over the *Wave Gleam's* rail and shook his fist in the lieutenant's face.

"What do you mean by that, Aulnay?" he demanded, his dreamer's face transfigured by a fighting glare. "Do you hint at arrest or something else for me?"

"No; you see there's no charge against you personally. The Government can't molest you unless you try to make a premature landing on Miquelon. Take my advice and don't try it before midnight of the fourteenth. It's a barred zone to you and everybody else till then. We have a guard of marines round your dune house and the *Man of Breton* and the *Hugo* patrolling the shore waters day and night. I'm on my way out to relieve the *Hugo* now; so I'll bid you *au revoir!*"

"*Au revoir*, Aulnay," nodded Marne, "and I hope the Government gets some enjoyment out of Platte's myth."

"Yes—and the colonials some exercise out of the search!" supplemented Marguerite.

"Well, maybe," the lieutenant called back as he entered his boat, "but no ill feelings, I trust! You see, we of the patrol do only our duty and go where we are told."

"No ill feelings at all—that is, personally," was Marguerite's reservation.

HER father watched Aulnay glide out in his boat through the crowded shipping and board the cruiser *Man of Breton*. Then he turned to meet Marguerite and Farnham coming across the *Wave Gleam's* foredeck.

"Well, Farnham, you see what you're up against with the offer of your vessel for the Miquelon race," he laughed banteringly. "You're up against the Government of France, armed force, swift cruisers and very likely a horde of the best sailing-masters in Newfoundland waters. Are you ready to risk all that for the gold I told you of?"

"Sure," declared Farnham, "ready to risk anything! I'll unload the fish today, tune her up tomorrow and have everything in trim for the effort next day."

"All right, then; that's the spirit I like!" nodded Marne, leaping out on the wharf. "Come up to my house tonight. There are some effects there we'd better smuggle aboard the schooner, for if we win out St. Pierre will never see me again!"

"And I," murmured Marguerite approvingly, pausing a moment before she sprang after her father to the quay. It's the spirit I like, too!"

"But you know it's not for the sake of a share in the treasure I'm risking it," he reminded her boldly. "You know it's for your own sake, Marguerite. How do you like my spirit now?"

Marguerite hesitated, colored, then, emboldened by the nearness of the wharf, turned a saucy face to him.

"Why—better than ever," she laughingly met his challenge.

She was gone in a flash, but the message of her eyes remained, and with a light heart Farnham turned to his unloading.

The *Wave Gleam* had a good fare. The cod had been washed once, when they were split on her decks on the Banks, and packed in salt in her hold, but now they were washed again. Along the island beaches, rimmed with round, wave-worn basalt stones, gigantic crates were sunk in the surf, and into these crates Farnham, old Zachary and the seven Grey boys threw boatload after boatload as fast as they could fill the dories from the schooner's hold.

Local beach boys from Savoyard and Isle aux Chiens and Metropolitan beach boys from France, serving their two years' apprenticeship before graduating to the status of a Banker, stirred the fish about with long poles to wash them thoroughly. Then they would withdraw them to shore vats to be steeped in brine before being dried. All about on the stony fields the drying process was in progress, acres of cod shining in the sun, of which the St. Pierrais took full advantage. For the archipelago was a fogland drenched in ocean fog sometimes for three full weeks of a calendar month, and they made their fish while they might. Every evening they gathered them up, only to spread them out at dawn if the day was clear.

It took all of the clear, blazing day to unload the *Wave Gleam*, but by sunset Farnham had finished. Leaving the picturesque beach boys, all in caps, jerseys and sabots, stirring in the last of his catch or covering the oblong stacks of fresh fish

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and the round stacks of dry fish with tarpaulins against the evening dew, he went up through the stony streets to the St. Pierre house of Philip Marne.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GIFT VESSEL

FAMILY gold of Miquelon that he claimed as his own Philip Marne had sworn to retain, not one-third but three-thirds, if Farnham's *Wave Gleam* was fleet enough to show her heels to the cruisers *Hugo* and *Man of Breton*. So that night they smuggled down to the schooner from Marne's house the things he could not reconcile himself to leave behind. With his disappearance the house would be confiscated by the Government in default of treasure, but its value was small compared to the million that lay buried in the sand-dunes.

The next day they made the round of the harbor, speaking with the captains or crews of every vessel that made the island outport and asking for news of the *St. Julien's* missing boats but hearing nothing concerning them. Vessels there were in plenty. The islands themselves boasted a colonial flotilla of two hundred sail, while from the motherland of France there engaged in the yearly fishing four hundred more bankers and trawlers, crewed by ten thousand men of the Norman and Breton coasts.

As floaters, they should have been on the Banks at this date, but the fact remained that they were here instead, almost all of them making St. Pierre since Farnham had left it. They had a full fare! They were out of bait! They had to renew outfits or obtain provisions! Such were the excuses they gave, but Farnham knew that the Government's proclamation had drawn every Gallic son of them from the fishing shoals for the treasure-race to Miquelon.

And none of them had seen a trace of Platte or his thirty-four! If any of the *St. Julien's* boats still floated, it seemed strange that no ship of that vast fishers' armada had seen or heard of them on the Banks. And, even if Platte's boat alone had made shore or been picked up, it was just as remarkable that no man of the fifteen thousand who filled St. Pierre's streets to overflowing and crowded the Café des Marins, the Café du Printemps, the Café Joinville, the Café Midi and all the other cafés, had cast eyes on him.

Farnham and Marne mingled with them in the cafés and streets, on the Quay de la Ronciere, out on the Route Savoyard, aboard their vessels in the harbor, but, drunk or sober, not a hint did any of them drop about the possibility of Victor Platte being alive. Farnham declared that assuredly some of them lied, but Marne contended that Platte or the others had never reached shore but slept like those who went down with the *St. Julien* along Newfoundland's rocky ledge.

Yet in spite of Marne's conviction Farnham still doubted. He could not get rid of the feeling that the famous smuggler was still alive, and the morning of the fourteenth brought a discovery that confirmed him in his doubt.

It was at matins in the Palais de Dieu. Marguerite, her father and Farnham had come into the little catherdral, packed with mariners, fishers and their folk, to hear the prayers of Father Lamont for those who harvested the wave. To the beautiful mass they listened, before them the altar furnishings that had come across the deep from Paris, above them a roof strung with full-sailed models of ships, on either hand the stained windows that sang in Biblical cadence the ancient threnody of the sea. His rapt eyes on these the gift-ships of sailors who had been saved by miracle in wreck or tempest, Farnham straightened up suddenly in his seat.

"What's the matter, Frederick?" demanded Marguerite surprized.

"Look at that model?" Farnham directed, nodding to one just over their heads.

MARGUERITE gazed on a tiny brigantine suspended under full sail, but she could notice nothing about it to differentiate it from many others.

"What about it?" she asked. "Isn't it much the same as the rest?"

"Don't you see any difference?" he responded. "Isn't there anything familiar about it?"

"Not that I can see," confessed Marguerite helplessly. "I'm afraid I'm not as observing as I should be. What do you mark about it?"

"Well, for one thing that it wasn't strung from the roof yesterday morning."

"You're sure of that, Frederick?"

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"Certain!" declared Farnham. "It has been hung since then, in all probability last night. I sat in this same place and I know."

"Well, then, maybe it has. But what's so remarkable in that?"

"Only that it happens to be a model of the lost *St. Julien!*"

Marguerite's eyes widened, and she gazed at Farnham incredulously.

"And you're positive you're not mistaken? Father, father," whispering excitedly in her father's ear, "do you hear that? A model of the *St. Julien* above us—hung there last night!"

"Bless my soul!" breathed Marne, raising his eyes. "Your sight is good, Farnham. I myself would have missed it in the churchly fleet. The brigantine, as sure as we sit in this seat!"

"Yes; and modeled by one familiar with the vessel, by one who has sailed her, or it would not be so true," asserted Farnham.

"You mean the drowned Platte?" demanded Marne.

"I mean the Platte who isn't drowned. There's the last of the service now. Ask Lamont who brought the new model."

As the people poured out after matins, the three approached Father Lamont, and Marne drew his attention to the model.

"A new vessel in your fleet, Father," he began. "And hung there lately, was it not? We don't seem to remember noticing it yesterday."

"It was brought to me last night," Lamont informed, "by a lone mariner who wished to render thanks for his salvation from the deep."

"All alone, eh?" echoed Farnham, catching at the suspicious circumstance. "Did you happen to know him, Father?"

"No; I am new on the islands, and I can't say that I ever saw him before. Besides, it was dark, and he gave no name, although he did speak of peril in open boats. Why do you ask? Have you news of another wreck?"

"None since the *St. Julien*," answered Marne. "You see, the model is the brigantine herself!"

"Is that so?" cried Lamont in deep surprize. "I do not know her captain, of course, but the lone mariner might have been he. I am very glad if he escaped with part of his crew. If it should be the case, you will doubtless hear from him today."

"Very likely we will," agreed Farnham with grim humor.

"And if you do, will you let me know?" urged Lamont. "I'd like to hear all the story."

"Yes, we'll let you know, Father," promised Marne as they left the cathedral.

"Now what do you two think about it all?" asked Marguerite when they were clear of the crowd of people.

"Why, it's Platte—there's nothing else for it!" argued Farnham. "The boats have been picked up and landed here secretly. Some of Platte's friends have done it, and they've lied to us when we asked about him. He's here in St. Pierre with his thirty-four men, Marne. I'd swear it on yon altar."

"Well, suppose he is," admitted Marne, putting aside grudgingly his contention that Platte had perished. "Suppose he is, Farnham. What's his next move?"

"He'll be in the race at midnight," prophesied Farnham with conviction. "He'll have another vessel with his thirty-four St. Malouins to build on as a crew. It's not alone the French Government we have to beat, Marne. It's not alone the six hundred vessels of the Banks fleet. It's Platte, the unkillable, nine-lived Platte, and by heavens, we're going to do it with the *Wave Gleam!*"

CHAPTER IX

THE LOOT OF MIQUELON

THE fourteenth of July was a great day in the islands, the annual fête day when the entire population of the archipelago assembled in St. Pierre for the yearly holiday. Many were there in advance, and all that morning they came pouring into the city, the five hundred dwellers on desolate Miquelon, the few sojourners on the far Brunets, people of the remotest outports, fishers from the Miquelon Banks, from Jerseyman, from St. Peter's and Grand.

The beach boys of Savoyard and Ile aux Chiens left their surf crates. The ancient graybeards deserted their shore-fishing dories and the women the two-wheeled carts with which they landed the spoils. Even the peasant *grand'mères* beheading caplin took a respite from their wire-covered drying-frames tipped toward the sun and came, white-capped and Breton-gowned.

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For St. Pierre was Brittany transplanted, and today as upon no other day of the year the language of the Gaul clamored in her streets, gossiping the latest gossip of the islands, the world news that leaked out of the transatlantic cable through the St. Pierre offices, the gratifying report that the St. John's steamer had found the liner *Tramontane* and towed her into port!

All outlying sections were drained to fill the gay tricolored capital and celebrate the day, and truly the St. Pierrais celebrated. Not a seat was empty at the little tables in the scores of cafés. The long French bars were loaded down with liqueurs, and through the maze hovered pretty barmaids, serving Madeira, French cognac, *crême de menthe* to the rich or *vin ordinaire*, Normandy cider, or West Indian rum to the peasant poor.

On the football field, too, they celebrated, cheering madly while teams wrestled with the pigskin and vied in other athletic events. And, when the dark fell, they gathered *en masse* to whirl their dances and gaze on the wonder pictures of the cinematograph till the midnight stroke of the cathedral clock and the boom of a gun from the cruiser *Man of Breton* in the harbor sent them pell-mell to the water-front.

A big megaphone in his hands, Lieutenant Aulnay greeted the water-front horde from the bridge of the *Man of Breton*.

"The shore of Miquelon is open to search," he announced. "According to the Government's proclamation I give you the sailing rules and the course for vessels."

From ship and shore a voluminous shout went up. Fifteen thousand people were clamoring at once.

"The rules!" they boomed. "The course!"

Everything was in a tumult, and, what with the noise on the wharves and the feverish final preparations of the crews aboard their vessels, Lieutenant Aulnay had to bellow for silence to give the rules and course.

"The course for vessels is across-channel and along the shore of Langlade to the Dunes. Every ship in the search is registered and numbered here with me—five hundred in all. Every ship must round the guarding-cruiser, *Hugo*, lying off the Dunes, as she would round a buoy and give her name, captain and number. That keeps outside poachers away. A vessel that does not comply with these conditions will not be permitted to pass by the *Hugo*. The lucky crew that finds treasure will signify ownership by planting their vessel's flag on the spot! Are you all ready?"

They were all ready, every Gallic son of them on Banker, trawler, schooner, sloop or brigantine, Colonial and Metropolitan sailing-masters, Terranovan skippers from their South Shore and Cape Bretonians down from their own island to trade and fuming to try their fortune. They were all ready, waiting tensely for the start, and tensest ship of the five hundred was the lone American schooner *Wave Gleam* with Farnham, Marguerite, her father and the eight Greys upon her cleared deck.

"Goodness!" gasped the girl as they waited a second or two in the hush that followed Aulnay's warning. "I wonder how we're going to start at all in this fleet."

"Oh, we'll get started all right enough," Farnham assured her. "My only wonder is where Platte is in the mob. I kept track of those that registered in the race. Up to the last minute Platte hadn't done so, and I'm number five hundred myself."

"Platte's poaching," vowed Marne. "Anything might happen to him in the race, and he's not going to handicap himself that way. He'd rather take a chance and beat his way round the *Hugo*——"

"Look out!" Farnham cut him off. "Aulnay's going to blow!"

"All ready?" trumpeted the megaphone in a final blast. "Then, go!"

A GUN cracked on the *Man of Breton*, a get-away signal that the deafest mariner could not fail to hear, and Hades broke loose on the five hundred cramped ships. Instantly, as Farnham had foreseen, the harbor was a blur of rising canvas and heeling hulls, a jam of grinding rails, ripping bowsprits and swinging booms. Sloop fouled schooner and schooner fouled brigantine, and ponderous steam-trawlers stove many of the smaller wooden vessels before they left their piers. Crew cursed crew through the snarl of their sheets and the rents of their torn canvas, and the crackle of Gallic oaths ran round like the town on fire.

Unlike the rest, Farnham had warned his crew not to lay a hand to the *Wave Gleam's* sheets. Instead, he had passed out boathooks, and, five men on her port rail, five on

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her starboard, the ten of them hooked on to the hulls on either side and forced the schooner ahead. With her knockabout rig she had no bowsprit. Both shortened booms were inboard. With no obstructions outboard and not a rag of canvas spread, she shot through and into the lead with nothing worse than a banging of her bare poles.

The moment she had swinging room, Farnham jumped to the wheel, the Greys sprang to the sheets and under jib, fore and main the schooner darted out of the harbor entrance.

"We're first, aren't we?" demanded Marguerite, glowing, trembling with excitement at Farnham's shoulder.

"I think so," cried Farnham, hard put to keep eyes on all the vessels in the shift of sails. "The *sirene de brume* will tell us in a moment. By Jove, yes—there it goes!"

The deafening blast of the fog-horn on Galantry Head shrieked joyously, announcing the first vessel to make the open sea.

"Both topsails, Zachary," Farnham yelled to old man Grey as the echoes rolled afar.

Under every ounce of canvas she carried, the schooner leaped like a racing yacht along the basalt beaches of St. Pierre.

"By heavens," breathed Farnham in exaltation, taking his eyes from the course to gaze for a moment into Marguerite's, "nobody'll get me—us now."

Wing and wing he drove the schooner, flying past Diamant Point, past Savoyard Point and soaring across-channel to Little Miquelon. It was an hour's race to Marne's house on the Dunes, but in their excitement it seemed to those on the *Wave Gleam* a matter of minutes. The climb and glide of the deck over the heavy surges, their swift flight across the star-pricked purple curtain of the night, the phosphorescent schools of fish that passed behind them like flashes of lightning—all combined to negative the element of time.

They rounded Cape Coupe on Little Miquelon before they were aware. The light on Platte Point winked at them, and the fog-trumpet blared the pleasant signal that they were still ahead. Then, as they scored the triangular strip of sea wedged in between Petit and Grand Miquelon, they raised the black hulk of the cruiser *Hugo* lying off the Dunes with all her lights ablaze.

"There she is!" Marguerite cried.

"We win, I believe!" declared Marne, drawing a long breath and wiping the spray from his face.

Farnham put the wheel down. The *Wave Gleam* swung on her heel round the hulk of the cruiser at anchor.

"Ship, captain and number!" bellowed the *Hugo's* commander.

"The *Wave Gleam*, Captain Farnham—number five hundred!" called Farnham.

"Right-O! Go ashore!"

Her sails emptied, the schooner hung in the eye of the wind, while three dories splashed down. Farnham relinquished the wheel to old Zachary, seized the *Wave Gleam's* flag that David Grey had run down and sprang into the first dory with Marne.

"You stay aboard, Marguerite," ordered her father.

"No, no; let me come!" she pleaded impetuously and sprang into the boat along with them.

Three Grey boys in each of the other dories, old Zachary and young George alone on the schooner, they pulled for the surf-pounded sands, and it was then, almost on Miquelon's shore, that they caught the loom of a brigantine's sails rounding the *Hugo* as a buoy.

"By Jove, that craft wasn't so close in our wake!" cried Farnham, staring. "It must have worked down from the northwest to make a show of rounding the cruiser. It's an outsider. Listen!"

"Ship, captain and number!" challenged the *Hugo*.

"The *Golden Hawk*, Captain Victor Platte!" roared back a great voice from the brigantine.

Farnham heard Marguerite give a little gasp. Ardently as they believed Platte was alive, it was nevertheless a shock to see and hear him in the flesh.

"It's Louis Perce's vessel!" identified Farnham. "The *Golden Hawk!* A thousand to one Perce was the man who picked him up on the banks. He's a smuggler tool of Platte's, and they've conspired together."

"Will the *Hugo* let him pass?" asked Marguerite breathlessly. "That's the question!"

"If he didn't register his ship, he can't get past," exulted her father.

"Number?" challenged the *Hugo* again. "What number?"

"The number of hell!" scoffed Platte.

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There was a swift shifting of the brigantine's sails against the purple, star-strewn sky. She veered toward the *Hugo*, and, before the latter could bring a gun to bear to halt her, the great bow that had battered many an ice-floe ripped out the cruiser's anchor chain with sheer brute force.

"Heavens!" ejaculated Farnham, as they hove the three dories through the surf-line. "There goes the *Hugo* dragging on the sands. Platte's been hanging off Musketa Point for that trick. But he's fixed the *Golden Hawk* as well. Too far in and can't maneuver in time to clear—he's going to go aground by the dune house. Quick—we don't want that horde of St. Malouins on our backs and the *Hugo* stuck in the quicksands!"

He caught Marguerite's arm, leading the race across the wave-splashed veranda of the rambling wooden dune house, covered with its moss and mold. He took time in the spirit of triumph to plant the *Wave Gleam's* flag fairly on the brick-roofed vault, but paused not to open the door. With the boat-hooks he and his crew battered off the damp, oozing bricks, exposing iron-bound chests piled up inside.

"There are seven of them!" breathed Marguerite, as excited as if she had never beheld the treasure before.

"And they weigh nearly five hundred pounds apiece!" supplemented her father. "Stretch your muscles, men!"

FEVERISHLY they heaved them up out of the vault, two men to each chest and two trips across the sands to the dories. Then they were off again, flying through the surf before the drifting brigantine should block them in. She passed within a fathom of them, vainly trying to save herself with her topsails and swinging her boats overside as she realized the effort was vain.

On her deck Farnham glimpsed Platte and Louis Perce and many of the St. Malouins who had crewed the *St. Julien*. Platte's sinister face looked down on the dories, looked ashore as if measuring the *Golden Hawk's* last chance, then came back to the dories slipping past.

"You're done, Platte!" called Farnham. "The brigantine's as good as gone. I wasn't fool enough to let my vessel get in the grip of the inshore currents. She's well offshore!"

A terrible light came into Platte's face. He whipped out his fisher's knife and launched himself straight down for Farnham's dory as the latter had seen him launch himself from the *St. Julien*.

"You have it, eh?" he snarled as he dropped. "And Marguerite, too? But by the virgin, I will take your spoils yet!"

He launched as from the *St. Julien*, but he did not land as he had landed in the jolly-boat that night of his desertion. Farnham's oar gave the dory a swift whirl. Platte splashed where the boat had been, his knife in one hand, the other hand clutching blindly for the craft, but, as he rose to the surface, Farnham's oar poised over his head.

"By heavens, no, Platte!" Farnham gritted as he struck. "What I win, I keep!"

Platte collapsed limply on the wave. A roller tumbled him inertly on the sands directly in the path of the grounding *Golden Hawk*, and over him crashed the brigantine, beaching and falling on her side, spilling her men like ants and taking out Marne's dune house bodily with her tall masts.

"There goes my last landmark," breathed Marne in anomalous sadness.

"Yes; and here's my *Wave Gleam* tacking about!" announced Farnham.

Inboard they slung the dories with the precious chests, the lid of one flying open in the handling and scattering golden disks about the schooner's deck.

"Bless my sta-ars!" ejaculated old Zachary Grey, scooping one up. "Coinage o' 1793. Tha-at's a powerful while ago."

"Yes, in my great-grandfather's time," elucidated Marguerite. "You know, Zachary, that the islands of St. Pierre-Miquelon have been ceded and retroceded, passed from hand to hand of Britain and France many times, and every time they passed treasure has been buried in the sands. Well, this particular treasure was secreted in 1793, when a British squadron seized St. Pierre, deported the inhabitants, and substituted Terranovans."

"An' who come to bury it?" demanded the old man.

"My great-grandfather, Francis Marne, the Colonial fishery monopolist," laughed Marguerite. "Wasn't it a unique hiding-place? It kept a good many years till my father penetrated it at last. And my

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mother? Ha! Ha! That was but a handy rumor. She does not need a grave. She is not dead but thrilling France with her voice. She is Madame Claire, the Parisian singer, Zachary!"

"Gol' dast my blessed sta-ars!" exploded Zachary, nearing blasphemy. "In all my navigatin' I ain't ever run agin the like o' tha-at. But we better scoot afore we be sighted. I heerd a plumb racket to the south when I was comin' about."

Zachary was right. Though the guardship *Hugo* was fast in the quicksands and unable to launch her boats through the sticky mire, the sea to the southward was filled with lights and the sound of drumming sheets and slatting canvas.

They were coming—the motley fleet of vessels they had beaten out of St. Pierre.

"Can't fade out too quickly, Zachary; so give her all you've got!" urged Farnham as the *Wave Gleam* swung her bow Cape Bretonward.

"Where to, Cap'n?" asked old Zachary.

"Gloucester first, Zachary, and I fancy you'll see many a strange port after that!"

The schooner caught her stride, gliding like a gull southwest by west, and as she winged through the night the lights of the marooned *Hugo* faded and the three hundred square miles of desolate Miquelon were swallowed in the deep. There was only the loom of Mount Chapeau and Mount Calvaire on the island's tip.

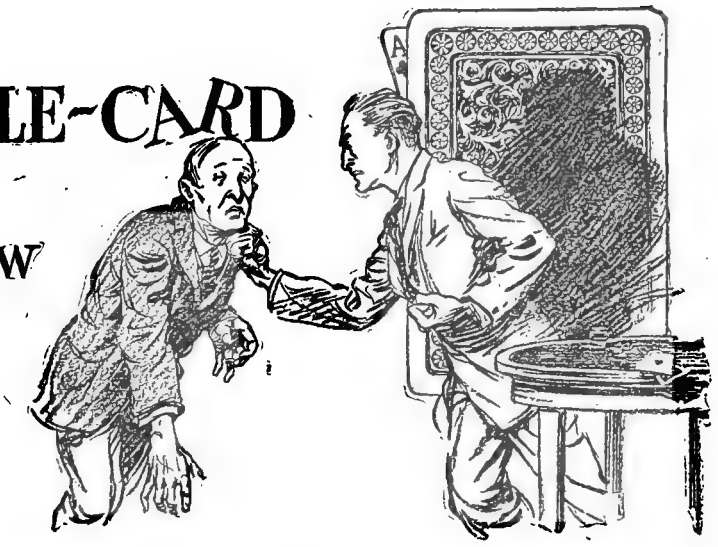
Presently these, too, were gone, and Philip Marne turned away with a sigh to help the Grey boys carry the chests below. Farnham and Marguerite remained alone on the foredeck, the girl staring where was no sign of land, only the heaving of the purple-green, phosphorescent sea.

"Good-by, Miquelon!" she murmured half in tears. "Frederick, it's all behind!"

"Aye," whispered Farnham, slipping an arm about her in the screen of the foresail. "But all the world's before!"

The HOLE-CARD

By WILL LEVINREW



"TWO dollars," sniffed "Big Jim" Hammond. "What's two dollars? If I only call, all these pikers will trail along and maybe outdraw this perfectly good hand of mine. Let's make it a good pot. It will cost you small fry two beautiful blue ones to buy—What's that; none of you going in? Very wise," as one after another of his old friends dropped their cards. "Now, reverend sir, what say you?" and he turned, smiling in large content, to "Parson" Fitzgerald who had opened the pot.

Fitzgerald peered at his cards and shook his head sadly.

"Verily, the ways of the wicked are past all understanding," he said. "You try us, the friends of your youth, sorely. You come here once a year and contaminate this beautiful Southwestern scenery with your

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high-toned, offensive Eastern ways. We treat you kindly. We restore in one week all the bloom and strength that a year's hectic life in New York robs from you. We have to make excuses for you to our friends by reminding them that you were at one time a regular man in these parts. And you abuse all this hospitality by trying to take our money."

Fitzgerald sighed again and pushed to the center of the table eight white chips.

"Gimme three cards, mostly queens."

Hornsnall, the dealer, motioned toward Hammond with his pack of cards.

"Cyards, if any?"

"I don't need any," said Hammond fumblingly separating one card from the rest. "I've got a pretty good hand; but—I'll take one off the top."

While discarding, he made an all but imperceptible motion, as if to throw away two cards, which did not escape Fitzgerald's watchful eye.

Fitzgerald tossed a white chip to the center of the table without looking at his cards, eying his opponent closely.

Hammond looked at Fitzgerald's stack of chips. Then he put in five blue chips and took out two white ones, saying:

"I ought to tap you, but I won't. You can't afford to lose all that money. I hear there is one man in this State who has more money than you. Twenty-three in all; raise you twenty-two. Know what twenty-three means, don't you?"

"Call him, Fitz, call him," urged Horsnall. "He's bluffin'. I know he is 'cause I dealt 'em. I'd 'a' stayed myself but I didn't have two cyards that wuz the least bit related. Go on, call him. If he wins he'll never git back to Wall Street alive to fleece any more innercent lambs. Johnny, there'll mistake him fur a bear when we go huntin' tomorrer—and Johnny never misses."

"I fain would call him," said Fitzgerald. "But I greatly fear me the temporal luck of the ungodly. He has three of a kind. He was going to throw away two cards," and he spread open his cards, showing a pair of aces as openers.

"Haw, haw, haw," roared Hammond, scooping in the chips. "Advertising sure does pay," and he opened his cards showing ace, queen, eight, six of hearts and nine of clubs. "Bring on the liquids and solids," he howled, pounding the table. "Fitz buys."

Idly fingering their chips the six old cronies were munching their sandwiches as they talked desultorily. Growth was slow in that town tucked away in the extreme southwestern corner of the map, which formed such a splendid setting for their annual reunion. The man from the East had quickly absorbed the changes that had occurred since he had been there a year before. On the morrow would start the week's hunting, after which Big Jim would go back to Wall Street where he was as much feared and respected as he had been formerly in his cow-punching, ranger and cattle-owning days.

"By the way, folks," asked Hammond. "How's my protégé, Tommy Heath, making out? I didn't let him know I was coming. Wanted to surprize him. Is he setting the country on fi—huh, what's the matter?"

The munching of food stopped momentarily and half-raised glasses were held in midair for hardly an appreciable length of time. Hammond's explosive "What's the matter?" was answered evasively by Fitzgerald who began to talk volubly, ending by taking up the cards with—

"My deal."

The big man opened his mouth as if about to speak, but thought better of it and play was resumed. But it was noticed that he did not play with his former zest.

With varying luck the game went on. The last consolation pot was played and arrangements completed for the following day. As Hammond and Fitzgerald, whose guest he was for the night, emerged from the Commercial Club and were about to step to the sidewalk, Fitzgerald seized his friend's arm, muttering—

"Wait a minute."

Hammond peered out through the glass panel of the door. When he saw the slouching figure that was passing he was about to start forward as if in greeting, but changed his mind and waited.

After an interval long enough to permit the figure to pass out of hearing, Hammond turned to his friends, saying soberly:

"Now then, out with it. What is all this mystery about? When I asked about him up-stairs you all became suddenly paralyzed and acted as if he had murdered his mother. What has he been doing?"

Fitzgerald stepped out of the doorway, watching the figure out of sight. He was silent so long after they started toward

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his house, that he seemed not to have heard his friend. But Hammond, who knew his friend's moods, waited patiently. Suddenly Fitzgerald burst out:

"The next time you adopt a wildcat or a whelp that needs nursing, just be your own nurse or hire one. Yes sir. You don't get me to do it again. When you wrote me that you were sending Tommy Heath, son of old Roy, out here, and asked me to sort of look out for him, I didn't like the job much. I've found it pretty hard during my experience to turn an Easterner into a Southwesterner and make a good job of it. But because of what old Roy meant to me, and his relations to you, I tackled it.

"But, when I think of helping him grow up with the country, I have to laugh. Why, he is going so much faster than the country that you can't see him for the dust. If he ran backwards now, this country couldn't catch up with him in a hundred years. Yes sir. He has learned all about this country it is good for him to know.

"I'll have to hand it to the kid; he's got sand. In this respect he takes after his father, but that makes him all the harder to handle. He took to our ways so well that he has gone the limit and is now regarded as a bad egg in a country where milk-and-water respectability is not highly regarded, as you know.

"I got him a job on a ranch, you know. In a short time he had made himself about as popular as the smallpox. Not for the reason that the average Easterner makes himself disliked; no. In a short time he could ride the rope with the best of them. And, though gun-play is not as popular a pastime as it used to be, he's practiced with a gun till now he can draw and shoot with almost any of us.

"That would have been all right, of course. The boys liked that at first. But he takes such darn good care to let everybody know that he is as good as they are and just a little better, that there are not many people who know him, who would not cheerfully poison him.

"If it were in the old days there might have been some funerals by this time. But, you know, the old verdict, 'Died, by getting in the way of a bullet," has not been issued a long time in these parts. We have regular courts and we don't shoot at human targets as often as we used to. So a number of the boys tried to teach him his place according to the code laid down by that Queensbury person.

"Well, about a dozen tried that with him and now there are no more candidates. He knows more about that game than the old marquis did himself. If he made the prize-ring his profession he would reach the top in mighty short order.

"I once tried to teach him the error of his ways. He told me, and he was not very polite about it, that he was white, free and twenty-one. That was the last time I tried that on him."

"Why didn't you write me about it?" asked Hammond.

"Well, old man, I took the job and I wanted to make good without calling for help. Something happened lately that would have made me let you know. But I knew you would be along pretty soon. Besides, you had enough to handle over there as it is."

"What's he been doing now?" asked the big man.

"HE HAS become a member of one of those 'clubs' that are run exclusively for the benefit and profit of one or two gamblers. It is run by a few men who are new around these parts and I don't know much about them. The games they are running are pretty steep for such a youngster and I understand they are crooked. By the way, how much money did Tommy have when he came here?"

"About fifteen thousand dollars."

Fitzgerald nodded.

"That confirms what I heard. I've been told that he's been losing pretty big during the last month. I found out at the bank, where I'm on the board, yesterday, that he has about three thousand left. I wouldn't care so much about the money, but I'm afraid the kid may be the star performer at a funeral. If he should find out that he's been trimmed, knowing his temper, he'll go at those sharks bull-headed and then there'll be trouble."

"Will they shoot?" asked Hammond.

"Not if they can help it. They'd rather avoid it. But, if he should get nasty, they will get him in a position where it will look like self-defense for them and he won't have a chance. They would kill him as cold-bloodedly as I would a snake. They can't afford to have the rumor go around that their game isn't straight. They also

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can't afford to have it told that they were bluffed by a kid—or anybody else for that matter.

"I am a member of that club myself. I went there last week to sort of look things over. But Jimmy showed so plainly that he thought that I was spying on him, that I've kept away from there. Now you know why I was praying you would come."

By this time they had reached Fitzgerald's house and were seated in his den.

"What game is it that Tommy is up against?" asked Hammond. "A crooked wheel, a sanded faro-deck, or what?"

"Easier than that," answered Fitzgerald. "They've got to keep up the bluff of a club; so they play only short card games. They've got him playing stud-poker."

"How do they trim him—readers, stacked cards?"

"Neither. The man who told me about it thinks that some one behind Tommy tips off his hole-card. Readers or stacked cards would be too raw in the company that's likely to play there. Some tough customers come to such places, you know; birds who wouldn't stand for such a thing if they were in the same game as Tommy.

"I would have gone there myself and broken up the game or told the kid about it; but he is about as easy to handle as dynamite and I wanted your advice. He would either call me a liar, and I couldn't stand that even for yours and old Roy's sake, or, if he believed me, he would go after those gents and go to his certain death.

"You saw how he looked when he slouched past the doorway a little while ago. I suppose he's been plucked again and made his regular contribution to the kitty of that club. Now then, what are we going to do?"

The big man sat chewing an unlighted cigar meditatively.

"That time when you went there, did you see the kid play?"

Fitzgerald nodded.

"How did he look at his hole-card?"

"I don't get you."

"Well, what way did he look at his card to make it possible for some one behind him to see it and tip his hand? You know no one could look at your hole-card or mine if we were playing. What does he do?"

Fitzgerald reached around the table, and from a shelf underneath, took a chip-and-card rack. Selecting a pack of cards he demonstrated. Putting two cards on the table, one face up and the other face down, he slid the open one under the other until they were face to face and their edges met. Then he lifted them to the level of his shoulders, holding them between his palms. At this point he turned back the numbered corner of his left-hand card slightly with his left thumb.

"See, Jim, like all greenhorns. Only he didn't put the edges together as carefully as I did. A man standing behind him can see his hole-card either when he turns back the corner, or, it might be seen when he lifts the two cards from the table."

"Fitz," the big man asked, "will those gamblers really shoot?"

Fitzgerald's eyes twinkled.

"Why, Mr. James Hammond, Esquire, I'm ashamed of you. To think of you, a prominent member of the New York Stock Exchange and most likely a pillar of the church, having in mind the bare idea of a shooting brawl with common gamblers. Fie! Fie!" Then he dropped his flippant tone. "I had that in mind myself, Jim. I was going there to provoke a quarrel and shoot it out with them. I'd make them draw first so I'd have a defense. But what's the use? How would that help the kid?"

"Oh, I think I can cure the kid all right. Not only that; but I think I can get his money back from those gentlemen, too. Do you think they'd play with me and try to trim me as they're trimming the kid?"

"I guess they would if they thought you had enough money and you looked easy; but what's the idea?"

Reaching across the table, Hammond picked up the two cards with which Fitzgerald had demonstrated.

"Now, Fitz, just stand behind me."

Holding the two cards face to face at the height of his shoulders, he turned back the numbered corner of the card that had been face down and continued:

"Step around back there until you reach a position from which you can see my hole-card without trouble, as I'm holding them now. Imagine you're the man who tips off my card. You must be able to see it without looking at it too closely."

Jim held his hands rigidly in that position while Fitzgerald sought a favorable place.

"All right; I see the card now."

"What is it?"

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"King of clubs."

"That's right. Just stand where you are." Dropping his hands to the level of his chest and holding them close to his body, he asked, "Can you see my hands or the cards now?"

"No."

"Just stand there another minute."

Putting both hands on the table in front of him he carefully lifted the corner of the closed card, shielding it with his cupped palms.

"Can you see my hole-card now?"

"No."

Without changing the position of his hands, he turned his head so he could see Fitzgerald behind him. After looking at him critically he nodded his satisfaction.

"Fine; now sit down and I'll tell you all about it."

Using the cards in front of him to illustrate his remarks, the big man went into a detailed explanation. As the plan unfolded itself, Fitzgerald was literally hanging on his words. At the end, Fitzgerald jumped up with a yell of pure joy.

"Wow!" he whooped, thumping his friend on the back. "You old he wolf. Still up to your old tricks. It's a wonder you haven't got all the money in Wall Street. The same old Jim."

Hammond was smiling.

"Think it'll work?"

"Work? 'Course it'll work. It's just a question of getting the kid to stay there and see it so he will profit by the lesson."

"Oh, I think I can get around him all right," answered the big man easily. "Too bad we'll have to postpone our trip for a day or two; but it's in a good cause. My goodness; look at the hour!" he exclaimed, looking at his watch. "Let's hit the hay."

THE air was heavy with tobacco smoke as the two men stepped into the inner room of the Harmony Club. The character of the place was apparent even to the casual observer. Here was none of the lightness found in the club where men of equal social and financial standing meet to kill time at cards. None of the chaff and light banter was indulged by the players.

Here was witnessed the rapid play of emotions by men who were playing for higher stakes than they could afford. The greed underlying most of the playing at this place was easily seen. Only in some instances was it thinly disguised by a mask of indifference. While the tensity of feeling was so manifest that it was almost palpable, seldom did any one give audible expression to it.

The pasty, pale faces, mole-like eyes and easy, businesslike assumption of indifference, the permanent mask of the professional gambler, made it easy to pick out these gentlemen in the busy scene.

The entrance of Hammond, a stranger to most of those present, did not excite comment. Once past the door, every man was regarded as a "member" on equal footing with the rest.

Four games were in progress as the two men entered, two games of draw and one large game of stud-poker. But it was the fourth game, at which only three men played, that seemed to attract most of the attention on the part of the onlookers. Fitzgerald's eyes narrowed as they traveled in that direction.

"They've got him all to themselves," he remarked, jerking his head toward the small table. "The fleecing can go on without interruption. Let's walk around casually and then we'll go over there. You'll see how they do it, if they do what we suspect."

As if merely on pleasure bent, the two friends walked from table to table watching the playing. A number of men greeted Fitzgerald and once he was invited to join a game of draw which was short-handed.

The game of stud was in full blast. Ten men were playing and several were awaiting their turn. Although the scene presented nothing new to Hammond, he watched it with genuine interest. Aside from the directions of the dealer and an occasional remark by a player which was strictly applied to the game, nothing was said at the table where hundreds—and sometimes thousands—changed hands nightly.

The old familiar monotonous drone of the dealer fascinated him. "King bets. Ace-eight bets. The pot's raised. Pair of kings, sevens in sight. Kings bet or pass. Possible flush. Ace-nine is high; possible straight."

After watching this game for a few minutes the two friends walked to the small round table where a fringe of onlookers watched the swift action. They found a place slightly behind and a little

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to one side of the young man who was the object of their regard.

A glance at the young man's face affected Hammond visibly. Though tanned a rich brown and glowing with health, Tommy Heath's face was beginning to show signs of dissipation and lines which should not have been there. Fitzgerald, who was watching closely, saw what was going on in his friend's mind. Hammond visualized the boy who, when a tot of seven, came to him an orphan and called him 'Daddy Jim.' He saw his old friend, Roy Heath, with whom he had shared the same blanket, bottle and grub. He remembered that he owed much of what he now had to the influence and help of this old friend. He also remembered the promise he had made to take care of little Tommy.

The sight of the same Tommy being stripped of his money and that much more valuable thing that makes for manhood, caused him a keen physical pain. The plan so carefully laid the night before was forgotten momentarily and his hand crept under his coat toward his left armpit. A grip as of a vise, friendly and sympathetic for all its vicious strength, brought him back to himself. His face cleared and without looking at Fitzgerald he nodded and the fingers released his arm.

Having been warned beforehand, Hammond easily picked out the salient features of the trick that was being employed to fleece Tommy. It required only a glance to see that his two opponents were professional gamblers. Hammond had no illusions about gentlemen of that type. In all his wide experience he had not met one "square gambler." He had met many who were sports but not sportsmen. He knew that it was not by their skill at playing according to the rules but their skilful evasion of the rules, their careful watch of the "percentage," that enabled them to make a living at their "profession."

A glance at the bystanders convinced him that while some might have suspected what was going on, most of them were merely attracted by the size of the game and the swiftness of the play.

The game being three-handed, there was no dealer. Each man dealt in turn. After watching closely for several minutes, Hammond became convinced that it was not in the manipulation of the cards that the gamblers' advantage lay. Tommy's hole-card was regularly signaled to his opponents whenever there was an important pot. Only the vagaries of the game and the youngster's inexperience accounted for the fact that he lasted as long as he did.

His unwillingness to lay down his hand, the optimism of the greenhorn who believes that "everything is in the draw," won for him a number of hands that an older player would have declined to play. Many times when the chances were seemingly hopelessly against him he outdrew his opponent on the last card and thus kept his stack nearly intact.

That Tommy should win even occasionally against such odds, to the evident chagrin of the gamblers, furnished Hammond and Fitzgerald grim amusement.

Then Hammond saw something that would make his task easier if he succeeded in his design of playing with Tommy's opponents. He saw that, to avoid complicated signals, they had devised a system that made it unnecessary for the man who was standing behind Tommy to do anything that was likely to attract attention.

At a critical stage of the play Tommy's opponent who happened to contest the pot would rest a finger casually on one of his open cards, indicating to his confederate that he had a similar card in the hole. Then a simple shake of the head by the man behind Tommy would show that the pair indicated was lower than Tommy's, or a nod would show that it was good.

Finally the inevitable happened. The big pot, which generally breaks up a short-handed stud-poker game because it breaks at least one of the players, came. After some lively betting the hand narrowed down to Tommy and one of his opponents. When all the cards had been dealt, Tommy had king, queen, jack and ten showing. His opponent had jack, nine, seven and trey.

After Tommy's bet of forty-five dollars the gambler studied a while. His hand, straying over the table, rested casually for the fraction of a second on the trey. His eyes, glancing over the bystanders behind Tommy, caught the slight nod of his confederate. Then, fingering his stack, he seemed to be considering his next step. Hammond and Fitzgerald knew that this was not assumed. The man was calculating what size and what manner of bet to make so that he would be certain of either a call or a raise from the youngster.

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LOOKING keenly at Tommy, he pushed to the center of the table a stack containing ten double-eagles. At this point Tommy made a play that would have been brilliant under ordinary circumstances. He promptly pushed forward all his gold and bills, amounting to somewhat more than eleven hundred dollars. His friends behind him, intent on the play, had seen the signals exchanged by the gamblers. Knowing that Tommy was beaten, they realized that it was a brilliant bluff and would have succeeded nine times out of ten.

No man familiar with the chances of the game would have called that bet without careful thought. To a good player Tommy's first bet of forty-five dollars would have seemed at this point like an invitation to his opponent to go deeper, or a bet on a sure thing hoping for a call.

A man in the gambler's position would have calculated thus: with a nine or ace in the hole Tommy would have a straight. King, queen, jack or ten would have beaten him. In addition to all this the size of the bet would have made him pause. The amount of the bet was so disproportionate to the amount the gambler had already put in that under ordinary circumstances he would not have called.

But the circumstances were not usual. Tommy's hole-card, for its practical effect on the other man, might have been face up. The gambler called the bet, exposing the other trey. Tommy's hole-card was an eight.

The youngster sat dazed for a minute. But blood and breeding told. He essayed a grin and was about to rise when a pair of arms with the strength of a gorilla's seized him from behind.

"Why Tommy, you young scalawag," roared the voice of Jim Hammond. "Here you are playing stud-poker while I am looking for you high and low. Why don't you learn to play this game before you tackle it? Here I've been looking for a game—a real game—all night, only to find a young scamp doing just what I'm dying to do myself."

During this monologue the big man was pumping the young man's hand like a pump-handle. While Tommy stood half-dazed, sheepishly trying to return the greeting, Hammond continued in a voice that could be heard all over the room:

"Why didn't you take some lessons from me before you tackled this game? There's two things you need in stud-poker: lots of nerve and a big wad. Yes sir. You must have a big wad so you can bluff the other guy once in a while and prevent the other guy from bluffing you. That's all there is to it. Come along, Tommy, we'll celebrate. I've just cleaned up on a big deal."

Tommy was listening to his Daddy Jim in amazement. Never had he heard the big man talk that way. A glance at the older man showed him that he was not drunk as he had first suspected. With a regretful backward look at the table he had just quit, where the two men still pretended to play, he was following Hammond out of the room when one of his late companions spoke.

"Heath, introduce us to your friend."

The usual formalities were gone through.

"Mr. Hammond, Mr. Grogan: Mr. Fenton, Mr. Hammond."

"Heard you tell Heath about looking for a game, Mr. Hammond," said Grogan. "And I thought we could accommodate you right here. Your friend wasn't very lucky. Maybe you can get some of the money we won away from us."

"Betcher life," bellowed Hammond. "Just what I'm after. I'll get it, too. Better look out for me; I'm awful lucky. Had a funny experience on the train coming over here. Got into a game with a couple of strangers and was tipped off they were card-sharps and would trim me. But they couldn't trim me. No sir. I quit. Believe me, you've got to travel some to get the best of me. Stick around, Tommy, stick around. Be my mascot and see how this game is played by a regular man. It won't take long. I'll have all the money you lost in a short time. Just watch me. After this is over, we'll go along and have a talk."

During this time he had sat down in the seat vacated by Tommy and was idly shuffling the cards. A swift glance was exchanged between the two men and their confederate, who was still standing where he had signaled Tommy's cards.

"Will we play a little freeze-out, Mr. Hammond," asked Fenton.

"Well, gentlemen," answered Hammond, "I don't know about this freeze-out thing. If you want to freeze me out of this, why, you're welcome."

"This" was a sheaf of bills he put before him that made his opponents' eyes glitter

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with greed. As he fluttered the edges past his fingers, they saw several orange-colored engravings, with such large numerals that, schooled though they were to mask their feelings, they could hardly restrain their excitement.

Both men did what Hammond expected. Their hands promptly went into their pockets and came out with all they had. One of them, Fenton, excused himself and came back shortly with an additional roll of bills. In no game like this do the chances operate so strongly against the man who has the smallest amount of money. And he must have it all, or all he intends to risk in the game, in front of him on the table, since table stakes governs the betting where no limit is named. Hammond had counted on the gamblers' knowledge of this principle, feeling certain they would try to match his stack.

Fresh cards were opened and the game began. Unlike most of the players gathered there, Hammond indulged in a continuous monolog and the three played to a running accompaniment of talk.

An air of tense expectancy was apparent through the gamblers' mask of indifference while the first hand was played. Hammond looked at his hole-card without lifting it from the table. When all the cards had been dealt him he did what many nervous, high-strung players do; he looked at his hole-card again. But this time he lifted it from the table.

Sliding one of his faced cards under his hole-card until the edges exactly met all around, he raised them until they were level with his shoulders. Here, holding them up-ended between his palms, he turned back the lettered corner of the left-hand card with his left thumb. He seemed to have some difficulty seeing the card, because he peered at it several seconds before he laid both cards down.

While he was thus looking at his card, the man behind him shifted his position slightly. Then, looking at Grogan and Fenton, he gave a quick, almost imperceptible nod. A visible air of relieved satisfaction spread over their faces. The prey had baited its own trap; the shears were ready for the fleecing. And the two men, who resembled nothing so much as they did vultures, set about patiently, like their prototypes of the animal and winged species, waiting for the end.

After the man behind Hammond had stationed himself to his own satisfaction, Fitzgerald took up a position to his right and slightly to his rear. Tommy, feeling duty-bound to wait for Daddy Jim, for whom he had a deep-rooted filial affection, watched the play. He also had the morbid desire that often makes the loser watch the game long after he had ceased having a personal interest in it.

Then a strange thing happened. With the luck varying, Hammond was nevertheless slowly forging ahead. This was partly accounted for by the fact that never once did he lift his hole-card from the table to look at it until all the cards had been dealt, or until some critical stage in the betting had been reached. So one or both his opponents had been frequently forced to trail along blindly with more or less substantial bets until they received the signal that they were beaten, when they would turn their cards down in disgust.

And bluffing would not do. The sure-thing gambler rarely bluffs on anything less than a cinch. Why risk a bluff when the result is certain? They tried a small bluff once with very unsatisfactory results. Hammond had called with such cheerful promptness that they gave it up. He had also shown that he had the strength of his convictions by betting largely on hands that he thought justified it. So they bided their time and waited for the pot which finally came.

ON FENTON'S deal it was the dealer's own bet with a king showing. Hammond at his left, with a deuce in sight, raised. Grogan, showing a queen, after a brief glance at his hole-card, trailed. Fenton also called.

On the next card Hammond got a nine, Grogan a king and Fenton a four. This put the bet up to Grogan, who passed. Fenton passed and Hammond bet an even hundred dollars. Grogan called and Fenton after a momentary hesitation also called.

The next turn brought Hammond an ace, Grogan a trey and Fenton a ten. At this point Hammond looked at his hole-card again. Sliding the deuce under his hole-card until the edges exactly met all around, he lifted both cards between his palms until they were level with his shoulders. Here he bent back the numbered corner of the card on the left with the thumb of his left

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hand. He again seemed to have some difficulty seeing that card and he peered at it three or four seconds.

At last as if satisfied he laid them down. Then he looked thoughtfully at his opponents' cards. During the time he had looked at his hole-card their eyes had strayed from him and were looking at the man standing behind him. They had not seen, therefore, that he was looking at their hands rather than at his cards. They did not know that he had seen Grogan's hand stray casually over his cards and allow the tips of his fingers to rest lightly on his queen.

Picking up his pile of bills, Hammond selected two from the bottom and dropped them on the coin and bills already in the center of the table.

"Bet two thousand I win this pot."

His loud, boisterous running fire of talk throughout the game, in addition to the unusual size of the stakes involved, had by this time attracted a number of spectators. The ten or twelve men in the room who were not playing were watching the play here with excited interest. They saw in front of the three men nearly half the annual salary of the President of the United States. And at any moment the turn of a card might cause it all to be bet on a single pot.

It was now up to Grogan. His confederate's signal assured him that his pair of queens was good. While he felt fairly certain that Hammond would call if he bet his whole stack, giving Hammond credit for a pair of deuces, such a proceeding involved a risk that the gambler was not willing to take. With the gambler's proverbial superstition, he believed in "beginner's luck" and he regarded Hammond as a beginner.

He was afraid Hammond might outdraw him on the last card. There is something more than disconcerting in "tapping" yourself or your opponent on a sure thing only to have your cinch vanish into thin air by his drawing another pair to his small ones or a bigger pair than yours.

Once all the money is up there is no help for it. You must abide by the turn of the last card. You can not bluff it out or take a small loss by laying down. That is what makes stud-poker such a delightful gamble —for those who can stand the strain on the emotions and the pocketbook.

Grogan played safe. He called the bet, hoping that the respective value of the hands remained unchanged after the next turn. Fenton, not seeing how he could improve his partner's chances by staying, turned his cards down.

"All set, Mr. Dealer," bellowed Hammond, pounding the table. "I've got a pair of aces and your friend don't believe me. Hold 'em good and I'll take his stack."

Fenton dealt out the last two cards, giving Hammond an eight and Grogan a six.

"Ace is high; your bet Mr. Hammond," said Fenton as he laid the pack of cards down.

"Tap you," promptly said Hammond, pushing forward all the money in front of him. "It will cost you all you've got to see how strong I am, Mr. Grogan. I warn you I've got you beat. I've got a pair of aces; better lay down and save money."

Without answering, Grogan was counting the money in front of him. Naming the amount he pushed it forward, saying:

"Count yours and take out what's over. Sorry to treat a stranger like that but I had to do it. Couldn't let you get away with the bluff. I've got another queen. Always was lucky with the ladies."

Turning over his hole-card, he exposed another queen, reaching for the money with a confident smile. Then the smile froze. His mouth and eyes opened wide and the hand that was reaching for the money stopped midway. Hammond had slowly turned over his hole-card and showed—an ace.

"Haw, haw, haw!" he was laughing boisterously, stuffing bills and coin into his pockets. "I told you to save your money and not call. Didn't I tell you I was lucky? Haw, haw, haw!"

As if moved by the same muscular impulse, both Grogan and Fenton shifted their gaze from the table. A glare, deadly in its intensity, was fixed from two pairs of eyes upon the man standing in a daze behind Hammond. By this time Hammond had put away his money. Suddenly the men seemed to realize the import of what he was saying and their gaze turned back to him.

"Don't blame your friend behind me, gentlemen; he did the best he could. He really thought I had a pair of deuces. If you like I will show you how I did it. I will also show my friend Tommy Heath how

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you three thieves fleeced—easy there!"

A spasmodic movement on the part of the two gamblers was checked. As if by magic, an efficient-looking large-caliber revolver appeared in his hand.

"Don't try that with me, folks; it won't pay."

The loud, boisterous tone had gone. The air of jolly good-fellowship of the man out for a good time disappeared. The mask of the lamb was dropped and there now appeared the real man underneath, capable, efficient, implacable. The words came slowly with a cold deadliness that chilled the men to the marrow. Each syllable dropped like an icicle.

"If one of you moves before I'm through you'll die. I can kill you both before you draw a breath. I'm going to put down my gun for a minute. But to be sure you don't make a mistake, just look behind me."

Both men looked over his shoulder.

SIMULTANEOUSLY with them, the man who had signaled Hammond's cards had drawn. The revolver had barely left his pocket when his wrist was seized with fingers that felt like clamps of steel and the muzzle of a gun was pressed into his floating ribs. His head turned to find the eyes of a tall thin man boring into his.

Those eyes of blue were now of an opaque indeterminate hue and were as steady and unwinking in their venomous stare as those of a hooded cobra. The gambler, without a word, dropped his gun. Fitzgerald, warily watching him, stooped to pick it up. Fitzgerald was again standing slightly behind this man and both guns were pointing in the general direction of the table.

Hammond continued:

"Maybe you know his reputation. He used to be one of the fastest men with a gun in these parts. If you ask him, he'll say the same thing about me. So you see it won't be healthy to get frisky with us. Now I'm going to show my friend Tommy how you trimmed him and then I'll show you how I trimmed you."

"See; it was like this. My friend Tommy used to look at his hole-card this way."

Sliding an open card under one that was closed, he lifted them, at the same time upending them by turning them from right to left. When they reached the level of his shoulders, he held them between his palms, the hole-card touching his left palm, the open card his right. Here he turned back the numbered corner of the card touching his left palm with the thumb of that hand.

"Your friend behind me has very good eyes and he could see the card as well as Tommy could. You would show your friend what you had by touching one of your open cards if you had another like it in the hole making a pair, or by an arrangement of the fingers if you did not have a pair. If you had Tommy beat, your friend would nod his head. If Tommy had you beat, he would shake his head and you would lay down.

"Now—I looked at my card like Tommy did; but your friend never saw my hole-card! First I would look at my hole-card like this."

He demonstrated by raising the numbered corner of one of the cards, shielding it carefully with his cupped palms, without lifting the card from the table.

"Then after a while I would pick up my cards like Tommy; but I would do this."

Sliding an open card under one that was closed he lifted them, at the same time upending them from *left* to *right*. When they reached the level of his shoulders the former position of the cards was reversed. His left palm now snuggled the open card and when he turned back the corner with the thumb of his left hand it was his open card and not his hole-card he was looking at.

"A few times I made you lay down when you had me beat because I made your friend think I had a big pair. In this last pot I picked up the deuce with my hole-card. What your friend saw was that deuce. The ace was on the other side. He didn't notice it was the same suit as the deuce I had on the table. He wasn't bothering his head about suits. All he was looking for was the number on the corner and I took good care he saw that. So you see——"

Behind him sounded a thud, a muttered exclamation and a gasping—

"Look out Jim."

As if touched by a live electric wire Hammond moved. As his right hand reached for the gun, his left propelled the small table powerfully forward, toppling the two men to the floor, where they had to waste a precious minute untangling themselves from table and chairs. Then he sprang to one side and backed against the nearest wall, thus facing the room.

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During his demonstration a man belonging to the club had walked in quietly and stopped a few feet behind Fitzgerald. When Hammond showed how he had fooled his opponents, this man threw a heavy stone match-holder which struck Fitzgerald below the base of the head, knocking him down. Fitzgerald was stunned only momentarily and, even as he was falling, he managed to turn and was scrambling to a clear space from which he could face his assailants and have no one behind him. While falling, he dropped one of his revolvers. But he still retained his own. As the man who had thrown the missile stooped toward him, he was stopped. Help came from an unexpected source.

Tommy, who was standing as if paralyzed watching Hammond's demonstration, saw what happened. As the man stooped toward Fitzgerald, Tommy showed why one of the oldest handlers of prize-fighters had begged him with tears in his eyes to enter the squared ring. Mind and body worked simultaneously. Swiftly, with an apparently effortless motion, he took a long stride forward and his fist described a short arc, meeting the man's chin. The man's head snapped back, his feet flew up and he fell sprawling to the floor.

Tommy had hit him as a prize-fighter hits. There was no preliminary drawing back of the arm, no waste motion. The rippling muscles from finger-tips to shoulders contracted as he saw his Daddy Jim's friend fall. Then the flexed biceps sent his fist forward with every ounce of one hundred and eighty-five pounds of young manhood, in perfect condition, behind it.

As the man was falling, Tommy, as if it were part of the same motion, aimed a vicious kick in another direction. The gambler who had signaled his and Hammond's cards was stooping to pick up his revolver, which Fitzgerald had dropped, when a number eight shoe propelled by a powerful leg and thigh caught him squarely in the mouth. He immediately lost all interest in the proceedings and a first-class job for a dentist was then and there established.

It was this tableau that Hammond saw as he sprang away from the table and backed against the wall. He had turned in time to see Tommy put the two men out of the fight. The young man was standing there looking ruefully at one of his fingers, which was bent at a grotesque angle. Fitzgerald was almost on his knees with one hand touching the floor in the position of a sprinter waiting for the starter's signal. His other hand was holding the gun. He was bleeding from a slight cut above the eye that he had received when he stumbled against a chair.

His resemblance to an old wounded wolf at bay was so real that the onlookers scattered hastily to get out of the way, several of them diving promptly under the tables. The two gamblers had extricated themselves from the table and chairs; but seeing what had happened, they dropped back to the floor and crawled out of the room, leaving Fenton's money scattered over the floor.

Drawing himself slowly to his feet, Fitzgerald stood leaning weakly against the wall.

"Hurt, Fitz?" asked Hammond, walking toward him, watching for another attack.

Fitzgerald shook his head and pointed at Tommy.

Hammond stepped up to the youngster and looked at his hand on which a finger hung limp, dislocated. Being capable of the rough surgery necessary to an outdoor life, Hammond seized the member and pulled. A slight snap was heard. Beyond a hardening of the jaws, Tommy did not make a sign. Then a splint was improvised out of several cards and the three walked from the room.

After walking in silence a short distance, Tommy stopped. His tanned face showed darker under an arc-light.

"Mr. Fitzgerald, I—I—er—I apologize. Daddy Jim, I've been a darned fool."

The two older men exchanged glances. A smile of satisfaction spread over their features. Hammond gazed steadily at the younger man for a minute. A pair of level, straight-looking, honest eyes met his gaze. Then he said slowly:

"Let's all go to bed. We'll go hunting tomorrow. Good night, Tommy; come along Fitz."

When the two men turned the corner, Tommy was standing where they had left him, staring after them. They walked on in silence for a while; then Fitzgerald broke out:

"Gad, what a two fisted son-of-his-father he is. But he's cured, Jim, he's cured.

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PROVIDENCE TAKES *a* HAND

by

ROBERT McBLAIR

HIS creased, coppery face impassive, his lashless lids half hiding his inscrutable eyes, Lean Wolf drained the bottle, worked his long lips in satisfaction, drew and expelled a deep puff from his clay pipe and spat into the fire. Sitting facing the Indian, on the other side of the wood fire that sent some of its smoke up through the hole in the bark roof of the lean-to, Harmon, bearded, squat and broad, held out two grimy paws to the blaze.

Both men had the collars of their greasy red-and-black mackinaws turned up; their moccasins were dry and hard from the fire. Above the back of each, against the slanting walls, a huge, changing shadow hovered and leaped. There was no sound except from the crackling blaze, into which, from the vent in the roof, an occasional drop of melting snow fell with a little hiss.

Harmon rose, stretched with his clenched fists held high above his head, got his snow-shoes from where they stuck up in the snow outside, tied them on, picked up his rifle and, pushing aside the deerskin hanging before the entrance, passed out into the white world.

The top of the opposite fir-clad mountain stood out like cardboard against the milk-white sky of dawn. Dodging a snow-laden branch, Harmon plunged down-hill on his four-mile walk to the logging-camp.

All night he had been plying Lean Wolf with whisky, taking of necessity a number of drinks while trying to get the Indian drunk. He felt that he had succeeded. Between them two quarts of "rot gut" had been disposed of, and, while the old Indian, sitting down, showed no perceptible effects, Harmon knew that very shortly he would be up to some deviltry. And that was what Harmon wanted.

He wanted the men over at the logging-camp to hear that the Indian was drunk; he particularly wanted them to think that the Indian had been drunk and up to deviltry three days before. Because three days before, at Twisted Gun Gap, something had happened which Harmon did not like to think of any more than was necessary.

As he walked, bars of orange and of pink shot into the eastern horizon, laid a faint color upon near-by hummocks and turned the white carpet of the forest into woven millions of minute fairy jewels. Overhead gray clouds, touched with a soft light, still shook down heavy flakes. Harmon, coarse and cruel of face, his eyes bleared by drink, was blind to the dawn's loveliness, but the prospect of clearing weather caused him to think of his tracks and he made a long detour so as to strike the trail at the side away from the Indian's camp.

"They'll have to git up early in the morning to ketch me," he muttered to himself, baring his tobacco-stained fangs in a grin. "He'll be raising ructions before sundown. Then they'll think it was him at the Gap the other day."

He stopped and slapped his thigh and laughed as an idea struck him.

"I'll tell 'em he's raising Cain," he ejaculated; "tell 'em he shot at me!"

He chuckled repeatedly as the idea more fully matured.

"Yes," he continued, "I'll tell 'em he come to me with a lot of money and bought the whisky. And then—yes—and then I'll tell 'em he had a strap from a package of

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mail. I guess that'll clinch it! They'll surely go git him and string him up after that. And I'll go down the river and have a spree."

He came now to where the Summer trail mark, bitten deep into the hill, still was discernible under the blanket of snow, and he turned and looked off reminiscently to where it wound toward the south—toward Twisted Gun Gap where, three days before, he had shot the mail-runner and had rifled the registered mail.

A SLIGHT sound attracted his eyes to the crest of the hill at his right. A big buck, with ten- or twelve-point antlers, was looking down at him curiously with soft bright eyes.

This would bring money at the camp. He threw up his gun, and, as the buck started off, fired quickly. The deer bounded away down the ridge, his waving "flag" showing him to be unhurt.

Rage surged over Harmon, and he had started upon an explosion of oaths when suddenly it came to him that, almost simultaneously with his, he had heard another shot. At this moment he heard, toward camp, something fall with a soft thud and a sob.

He ran along the trail. Before he had gone twenty steps, the ridge fell away before him and at his feet lay the limp figure of Bud Jason, the new mail-runner. The man lay on his side, his head buried; blood was slowly spreading over his pack-bag and dripping on the snow in shrill red clots.

He lay in exactly the position the other man had lain at Twisted Gun Gap. The coincidence staggered Harmon for a moment. Then he turned the man's face out of the snow and felt for the heart. His numbed hands told him nothing; so, pulling off his muskrat hat, he placed his ear on the fellow's breast.

The man was as dead as a nail.

Harmon rose, dusting the snow from his hands—and looked into the muzzles of two rifles.

He knew the men well, and, what was worse, they knew him well. They were Donald MacDonald, the big Scotchman with red cheeks and fair beard, and Lafe Malone, short and broad, with blue-shaven chin, and eyes that for once had lost their smile.

"We thought we'd ketch ye if ye did it again," commented MacDonald. "Lay doon the rifle."

"I didn't do it!" shouted Harmon angrily. "I shot at a deer." He started backward over the trail. "Come; I'll show you the tracks!"

"Lay doon the rifle, or I'll shoot ye," MacDonald answered.

"The Indian did it," insisted Harmon as he obeyed. He knew that the guilty Lean Wolf was somewhere up on the hill. "I saw him drunk last night."

"Come out here and face doon the hill," commanded the Scotchman, and Harmon, suddenly cowed by the way the men looked at him, complied.

As he came over by MacDonald he felt a hard shove on his shoulder; his off snow-shoe was immovable; he plunged on to his side, sinking up to his collar in the deep snow. MacDonald had tripped and thrown him.

He struggled, trying to get up, but the snow-shoes kept his feet elevated like balloons, and he could find no purchase in the snow for his hands. He paused in his writhings at what the Scotchman was saying.

"I'll count three," said MacDonald.

Harmon rolled over and sat up. The two men had stepped back several paces, and their guns were held ready. But his whisky-soaked mind refused to believe their evident intention.

"One," said Donald MacDonald.

By a strange backward slip of thought, Harmon in a flash saw himself as a little boy at his mother's knee. She was reading to him; he saw the creases about her gentle eyes; he even remembered vividly the story. It was of a man on a scaffold; the rope was about his neck; the trap was set and unless dust soon arose on the road. . . .

"Two," said Donald MacDonald.

Suddenly Harmon's tongue, frozen with horror, loosened to a torrent of wild words.

"O God! O mother! I didn't——"

"Three!" said Donald MacDonald.

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WITCH-DOCTORS

A Four-Part Story
Part III

by
CHARLES BEADLE

Author of "The Winged Avenger," "The Black Lure," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

ON A bayou of the great lake that is the northern boundary of German East Africa lay the station of Ingonya. Round mud huts housed the native troops, and in a red-pillared bungalow lived the young *Kommandant*, Herr Ober-Leutnant Hermann von Schwitzer und zu Pfeiffer.

When zu Pfeiffer learned that the man who came to the post one day for an elephant license was an American, his manner grew most cordial.

"So you go to the Wongolo people, Professor Birnier," he said. "You will find them most interesting. King-gods, witch-doctors, and all that. Er—won't you come in and have a cordial?"

In zu Pfeiffer's library Birnier stopped to stare at a picture that hung upon the wall.

"Who—who is that?" he gasped.

Zu Pfeiffer stroked his upright mustaches complacently.

"That," he said, "is my fiancée."

"My——!" cried the other. "It is my wife!"

Zu Pfeiffer choked with rage.

"*Teufel hol' es!* Sergeant!"

A white non-commissioned officer appeared at the door.

"Arrest that man!"

Two days later Birnier, charged with being a Swiss spy, set out for Dar-es-Salaam under a native guard. Such is the working of Prussian jealousy.

Before the party left, zu Pfeiffer called the colored corporal to him.

"Corporal Inyira," he said, "this man is an enemy of your people as well as of mine. He will sell you all into slavery—if he lives. He must never get to Dar-es-Salaam alive. Understand?

The corporal understood.

FROM the eight hundred huts of the City of the Snake, in the land of the Wongolo, rose shouts of praise and thanksgiving. After a long drought the rain had come.

Kawa Kendi, the new king-god, had brought the rain. By chant and incantation he had summoned it from the sky. As king-god and incarnation of the idol Usakuma, the spirit of the Snake, rain-making was his chief function. For failure at this function the chiefs and witch-doctors had slain his father. Then with weird ceremony and strange rite they had put him in his father's place.

King-gods had to renounce many things, including their wives. They took their place by heredity. Bakuma knew this and trembled with joy and fear. Bakuma was a maid of the village. She loved Zalu Zako, the son of Kawa Kendi. But Zalu Zako did not know of the girl and her love.

To Marufa, the witch-doctor, came Bakuma for a love-charm.

"Bring me a fat goat," said Marufa.

"*Aiel Aiel* No fat goat have I!" cried the girl.

Bakuma was in despair. M'Yalu, a young warrior, loved her. She feared he would buy her from her uncle before she could win the love of Zalu Zako.

To Marufa came also M'Yalu.

"The girdle of Bakuma is already tied," said the witch-doctor.

"By whom?"

"By Zalu Zako."

"*Ehh!* Hast thou medicine powerful enough to trap the soul of Zalu Zako when it wanders?"

"For three tusks of ivory I can do it."

"*Ehh!*"

"Bring me of his toe-nails one paring, of his hair one, and his spittle and a footprint."

"*Ehh!*"

Thus was plotted the death by enchantment of Zalu Zako, son of the Snake.

ALL day through the hot jungle the American was driven with his men. Birnier was almost mad with thirst and rage. But when they halted for the night and the blacks took to drinking the brandy from his stores, he began to think calmly again.

Soon the guard was drunk. Birnier crept out into the night. With a box of matches from his belt he rubbed his face and body and made himself into a fiery-eyed demon. Then he walked back to where Inyira and his soldiers were dancing about the fire. With a howl and a shriek the natives fled and Birnier was left with his own men, who hailed him as a god.

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News of this white god, called Moon-Spirit, spread quickly among the tribes. One day a chief came to him, telling how another god, pale as a stripped banana, had set upon the Wongolo with strange weapons and had driven them from the City of the Snake. This god was called Eyes-in-the-hands. From further description of him Birnier recognized zu Pfeiffer.

To Birnier came also Bakuma, fleeing. Birnier had been among the Wongolo before, and she remembered him. Timidly she told how she had been chosen for sacrifice as the Bride of the Banana at the Harvest Festival—just when her lover had begun to smile on her. Then had come the strange god with darts of fire, who had smashed the idol and killed the king-god, Kawa Kendi.

This much Bakuma told. She did not know that in the village to which the Wongolo had fled the chiefs and witch-doctors were debating with bitter words what should be their course. M'Yalu and Yabolo, were for submission. Others were for fighting it out. So aroused were the warriors that no time was found for making Zalu Zako king-god.

On through the jungle Birnier made his way. At every village Mungongo, his boy, boasted of his master's power as a god, while Birnier inquired the way to Zalu Zako.

Birnier had a plan.

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ABOUT a mile from Birnier's camp, through forest so dense that even the progress of a native, clambering from trunk to trunk and over undergrowth ten feet deep, was slow and tortuous, was the temporary village of Zalu Zako: some six or seven hundred huts of branches and creepers straggling over a wide area of ground which had been roughly cleared from undergrowth.

The hut of Zalu Zako, as most of those of the bigger chiefs and wizards, was furnished with reeds upon the floor to avoid squatting actually in the green slime, and boasted a palisade run from tree to tree enclosing the huts of his two wives, women, and slaves. Every morning the leader of a long line of slaves bringing supplies from the villages in the open chanted softly the song of the march, suddenly emerging into the village through a mass of creepers which hung like a curtain of humid green. Many hundreds of warriors with their chiefs had deserted their king after the flight from Yagonyana's village, so that there were now scarce fifteen hundred of them.

In the mind of Zalu Zako was doubt and perplexity as in those of his people. All the accepted "laws" and "facts" of his world had been set at naught; it was as if buck lived in the rivers and fish ran roaring through the forests. Fear, curiosity and resentment filled him.

Sometimes it appeared that Eyes-in-the-hands had indeed proved to be a more powerful god than the dead Unmentionable One, of whom he was—or should have been—high priest and king; that he had eaten him up as they said. So perhaps the better course was to submit to this being invincible. Yet this very anarchy of his world beliefs had released once more the love for Bakuma, whom he had renounced, the desire for her having been inhibited by the sense of inevitability of the mandate of the witch-doctors.

Hereditary custom, which made him feel that it was incumbent upon him—a primitive sense of duty—to be king-god, warred with this longing for Bakuma. The fact that he was not yet bound to celibacy quickened the seed of rebellion against the domination of the wizards. If he could escape the god-hood, then Bakuma was alive again, for to his savage mind a ban upon the personal ego was infinitely stronger than any ban upon a second person.

Chewing the cud of this sweet grass of hope, squatted Zalu Zako one morning in the dignified solitude of his compound on the threshold of his hut. Opposite him sat the brother conspirator of Bakahenzie, Marufa, a brown shadow in comparison to the gleaming of the royal insignia of the ivory bangles. They sat silent, motionless, save for the occasional sparse movement of snuff taking.

In the steamy heat a continual mutter and rustle persisted, punctuated by the harsh scream of a green parrot or the squeaks of a troop of monkeys. In the faintly spattered sunlight percolating through the boughed roof, vivid lizards rivaled in color the rare finger of an orchid clinging to the great tree beside the hut.

Through the humid air came the faint chant of carriers at the end of a journey; swelled louder and ceased. At the mutter of greeting near-by, Marufa grunted.

"The beaten dog returns to nose in the garbage," he mumbled.

"Maybe he hath news of the doings," commented Zalu Zako after a pause.

"The young dog starts a buck in every tree-stump," returned Marufa.

The mutter and mumble of voices in the

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hut of Yabolo, near to Zalu Zako's, continued. Neither Zalu Zako nor Marufa knew other than that, after his downfall, Sakamata had retired to his native village on the southern boundary, where the people, being laymen, had believed the excuse for his absence given by Sakamata, that he had retired to the forest for one moon in the guise of his totem, the wart-hog, which animal accordingly became tabu to their killing for that period. At length came a young slave from Yabolo, who, after saluting, delivered a message from Yabolo requesting that Zalu Zako receive him and his relative Sakamata, who had weighty news for him.

Presently entered Sakamata, bearing signs of prosperity in the flowered print about his loins, the ancient cartridge-pouch and belt slung around his waist and a huge revolver of the pin-fire model dangling from a neck which appeared more tortoise-like than ever.

Before Zalu Zako he squatted and, after they had exchanged the usual hostages to hostility, inquired most politely after the health of the son of the Snake, of his cattle and of his fortune and last of all of his women.

Sakamata, aware of the loss of prestige suffered by his old enemy Bakahenzie, presented Zalu Zako with a duplicate of the pin-fire revolver. Followed an equally extensive greeting to Marufa. Only when these ceremonies had been punctiliously performed did they begin to discuss the news.

At first Sakamata proceeded to repeat the popular saying regarding the doings of the Eyes-in-the-hand. Various chiefs had visited the fort of the white man bearing presents in their hands, terrified of what might happen; yet, according to Sakamata, their fears had been dispelled immediately, for the wise new god had received them as brothers and had made offerings to them as was the custom for strangers to do. It was true, he admitted in cross-examination, that whole villages had been put to the sword and burned; but, he demanded, was not that the way of a mighty warrior to those who resisted him?

MOREOVER, continued Sakamata, to fight him was death, for his magic was such that no man could prevail against him. Had any doctor yet succeeded in making successful magic against the Invincible One? His magic was terrible to behold. Spirits which were imprisoned in pieces of trees—boxes—spoke and sang according to their tribe.

"*Clk!*" commented Zalu Zako incredulously.

"These words are as the wind in the trees at night speaking to girls," commented Marufa slowly. "What man hath beheld those things with his own eyes?"

Deliberately Sakamata tapped snuff, inhaled it with relish, meticulously, that not one grain was lost upon his white caterpillar mustache, and said indifferently—

"Even he who sits before you."

"*Ehh!*"

Another point was scored, but both Zalu Zako and Marufa regarded him as one who, having had dealings with the devil and yet having emerged safely, was to be suspected of having made some ghastly pact. After a calculated pause Sakamata continued nonchalantly:

"There is no magic like unto Eyes-in-the-hands, the mighty one. A great fort hath he made upon the hill of thy grandfather (Mfunya Mpopo) O Zalu Zako, girded with a great palisade around which walk ever the red devils in uniform, each one of whom hath a gun with seven voices. And peering through that palisade like a terrible black leopard from his lair, are the monster coughing devils. *Eh!* Who are they who can withstand them?"

"*Eh!*" echoed his audience with lively memories of the coughing devils.

"And he hath within a mighty hut, made from the white man's cloth of color like to the forest, full of things to make magic. Seated upon his chair like unto a man plucking bananas, the eyes upon his hands and in his head gleam so fiercely that water is made within a man, for he who dares to look sees not only Eyes-in-the-hands, but his two souls, even as thou seest thine own two souls staring at thee with the frightened eyes that are thine!"

"*Ehh!*" This time a genuine stomach grunt was elicited, and even Marufa moved uneasily.

"Thou hast been bewitched," he added to cover his astonishment. "For a man may see his own soul in any pool, but never two souls!"

"Even is it as I have told thee, O son of M'Tungo," asserted Sakamata.

As Sakamata discovered the use of snuff

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again to be necessary, he watched covertly the repressed excitement in the eyes of Zalu Zako.

"And what said the great magician unto thee?" Marufa demanded to cover his discomfiture.

"He spoke white words as a warrior should," said Sakamata. "He gave words which told me that he was but a small wizard. He made my eyes to see the soul of a greater god than he, who was there and yet was not there, for at the touch of his magic hand with many eyes, behold—there were two more souls of the god, which returned even as I looked."

"*Ehh!* A greater god than he?" demanded Zalu Zako, with a flicker of the white of his eyes.

"Even as I have said, a greater god, who is king of all the white man's countries in the sea, who eats up those whom he pleases. Yet, even though he may bewitch with one of his eyes, did he speak softly to Yagombi, the son of Bagazaan, and Zalayan, the son of Kilmanyana, who were with me, bidding us to tell our brethren that if they would not acknowledge the true king that then would he eat us up, even as he ate up the Unmentionable One. But to those who would submit and make due tribute would he protect in peace from the white men who, fleeing from the wrath of the great god, would soon come to eat up our country like the locusts."

"*Eh! Eh!* White men as the locusts!"

"Thus he spoke and bade us to go forth and tell our brethren."

This was a wholly new idea and proportionately serious, if true. But Marufa, recovering from the first shock, wrapped himself in his professional cloak of omniscient indifference as he recollected that Sakamata was in truth an unfrocked priest of the craft. The group took snuff sternly until Sakamata, having accomplished his mission, deemed it wise to retire to allow the suggestive ideas to germinate.

So gravely he arose and departed from the hut of Zalu Zako and went, under the patronage of Yabolo, to another compound, where to a group of the most disaffected chiefs, including M'Yalu, he repeated nearly word for word the same harangue.

The two points regarding Eyes-in-the-hands' reputed magic of making the three souls of man visible and the threat of many white men coming to eat up their country, produced very much the effect that they were designed to do. The terror inspired already by the ferocious massacres and the terrible guns supported Sakamata's vaunting of the power of his magic, and to that was added the new terror.

Better, most of them thought, to propitiate one evil in order that the conqueror would protect them against many evils. Yet among the wizards there remained still a faint suspicion of Sakamata. Each wizard, aware of the intrigues in the mind of his colleagues—for to them as to whites, motes loomed largely—to take advantage of the unparalleled situation, naturally translated Sakamata's motives in the same terms. Of this Sakamata was conscious. Exactly as before he did not press the point. He squatted as silently and as absorbedly as he had done in zu Pfeiffer's office when regarding the table-leg.

BUT upon M'Yalu, to whom the ways of the craft were not so known, these views and concealed threats made a great impression. Visions of recovering the ivory left in the village returned; also that by winning favor with the new conqueror he might be able to snatch Bakuma from her doom. He said nothing at the moment—in the native manner—but decided that he would return to the village with Sakamata.

Sakamata, in spite of his knowledge of Bakahenzie's lowered prestige, had not ventured to approach his old enemy. But to Zalu Zako and Marufa, squatting in the former's hut, came Bakahenzie, the disturbed state of his mind evident in the fact that he could not restrain himself long enough to wait until some one of his most trusted partisans advised him of the details of Sakamata's mission. So with Zalu Zako and Marufa sat Bakahenzie and talked upon many things before one word of the real object of his visit was broached.

In the minds of Zalu Zako and Marufa the report of Sakamata had been equally disturbing. Marufa began to wonder whether he had not better make terms with the new god before worse came to the worst in the form of white men like locusts, an idea fraught with dire possibilities which were based upon the rumors which every native had heard of the ways of white men in bulk—to the Wongolo merely vague stories from the north of the conquest of the Sudan by the British.

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Marufa's ambitions in the craft were almost submerged in the indefinable dread that, wizard though he was, he would have small chance of distinction and power among a race of wizards. To Zalu Zako, although the prospect of unlimited white men swooping upon them was terrifying, his semi-conscious mind was rather occupied with Bakuma than with affairs of state, which seemed merely to exist to torment lovers.

However, he, too, was sufficiently impressed to consider seriously the advisability of submitting before it was too late; but the motivating principle of his action was an idea which suggested that, in some indefinable way, such action might lead to the avoidance of the ban of godhood and thus to the reinstatement of Bakuma in the realm of possibilities.

To Bakahenzie the report was more alarming than to the others, inasmuch as it appeared to portend the irretrievable loss of his power. He saw the effect upon their minds, the inclination to submit to the new conqueror. This, of course, would mean the last of his followers being swept in the crowd like dry leaves in the wind.

But more than the others he suspected the motives of Sakamata, the man whom he had unfrocked. Arguing in terms of his own mental processes, he saw correctly enough that Sakamata was surely playing for himself and saw equally truly that Sakamata would get, or thought that he would get, many rewards political as well as in kind for his services as jackal to the white man.

But he listened and said no word for or against him. He was astute enough never to make a move until he had, or thought that he had, all the moves of the game worked out. Marufa was just as wily; he related the news given by Sakamata in a voice which revealed no hint by tone or words of what any of his opinions might be. Then, as they sat like graven images supremely indifferent to the doings of Sakamata or aught else, entered the warrior bearing greetings from Birnier to Zalu Zako.

Immediately Zalu Zako, to whose less skilled mind in intrigue this succession of world-shaking events was somewhat bewildering, feared that already the plague of white men like locusts had commenced. But when he learned that the white man was alone and was Golden-Mouth, the only white man whom he had ever met, he saw vaguely some remote prospect of achieving his desires. Almost eagerly for a native he commanded the messenger to summon the white man to his presence.

But to Bakahenzie the unexpected arrival of another white was an unforeseen potentiality of a force which might be utilized to his own benefit; so also thought Marufa and this was in effect exactly the same reaction as upon Zalu Zako. Therefore did Bakahenzie immediately object upon the ground that no stranger could be allowed to approach the son of the Snake or even the village, who had not been purified according to custom. When Zalu Zako protested he retorted:

"Hath not one white who was permitted to enter our country without the demon being exorcised wreaked disaster upon us? Wouldst thou then destroy us utterly?"

Zalu Zako was silent. Much as he would have desired to overrule Bakahenzie, much as his confidence in the powers of the chief witch-doctor had waned, yet there remained sufficient to overawe him when the matter was put to a crucial test.

Bakahenzie would, so he stated, go himself to see the new white man, thus unselfishly taking upon his person the whole risk of the blasting magic of a stranger unpurified.

But Marufa had no intention of allowing Bakahenzie to obtain a monopoly of this possible new ally. Unlike Zalu Zako he was not burdened with awe and had confidence in his own magic to overcome any evil that Bakahenzie might seek to work against him.

So, when he announced that he too would accompany Bakahenzie, that distressed wizard was too conscious of his dwindling prestige to object.

XV

JUST after sunup next morning, as Birnier was seated at the door of his tent, reading his "Melancholy" and drinking his coffee, a startled exclamation caused him to glance round. He saw Bakuma rise suddenly from the fire and disappear. The next moment materialized out of the miasma of the morning the figures of Bakahenzie and Marufa, followed by a file of warriors.

Portentously solemn, Bakahenzie stalked to the fire and squatted down without even

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a murmur to Mungongo, who was busy with the breakfast. Bakahenzie remembered Golden-Mouth very well, but, nevertheless, designedly Birnier ignored him in return. So they sat, the two wizards taking snuff with grave concern almost at the feet of the white, who continued to smoke and to read.

The sign boded ill, for the insistence upon the punctilious etiquette implied that Bakahenzie was disposed to be suspicious, if not directly hostile. And indeed the warrior's description of the magic of Moon-Spirit, via Mungongo, had made Bakahenzie uneasy.

After a full half-hour Bakahenzie, as if beaten in this solemn game, turned gravely and saluted the white. Birnier looked down from his chair with the affectation of just having noticed that some one was there. After a pause he returned the greeting, a little point which Bakahenzie thoroughly appreciated. Birnier knew that, according to Mungongo and the warrior, Zalu Zako had not yet been anointed king-god; therefore, Bakahenzie evidently intended to keep the young man in the background.

After preliminaries Birnier inquired after Zalu Zako and informed Bakahenzie that he had journeyed expressly to see him. Bakahenzie ignored the question and began to talk about the Eyes-in-the-hands, demanding to know whether Birnier was his brother.

"Nay," said Birnier. "Eyes-in-the-hands is not of the same tribe as Moon-Spirit—" he sedulously followed up the title which Mungongo had given him—"Eyes-in-the-hands comes from a country twelve moons distant from my country."

Marufa squatting beside him grunted; Bakahenzie took snuff nonchalantly, as if he did not believe a word.

"Eyes-in-the-hands is a mighty magician in his own country," said Bakahenzie in the form of an assertion.

"The magic of Eyes-in-the-hands to the magic of Moon-Spirit," stated Birnier, "is as water to the beer of the banana."

"Eyes-in-the-hands," remarked Bakahenzie indifferently, "hath magic to make the souls of man to be seen by all."

"Those are but the souls of the stomach and body, but Moon-Spirit can enchant so that the spirit of the head of man be seen at night," boasted Birnier, wondering what trick of zu Pfeiffer's had produced the effect.

"Eyes-in-the-hands," insisted Bakahenzie, "hath a spirit in a piece of a tree which cries or laughs, sings or talks to his magic."

"Phonograph? But I can go one better, my friend!" thought Birnier.

"Moon-Spirit," he retorted, "hath also a spirit in a piece of tree who will speak words of wisdom unto thee in thine own tongue, who will repeat that which is said unto him in thy tongue or in my tongue, who will speak words of wisdom unto even thee."

Bakahenzie seemed outmatched in the boasting tournament. He tapped snuff woodenly. Marufa scratched his skinny ribs thoughtfully. Then Bakahenzie remarked—

"He that hath not been cleansed may not look upon the son of the Snake."

"He that hath not been anointed need have no fear of the evil eye."

"Hath not one who was not cleansed entered and cast evil upon the tribe?" demanded Bakahenzie.

"If the fence is not strong, the leopard will enter."

"If the leopard be not strong and swift, indeed, may he not be killed in the hut?" inquired Bakahenzie.

"If there be a leopard and a wildcat break in, then wilt thou not kill the leopard first?"

"Even so," retorted Bakahenzie; "then is water stronger than beer even as the beer doth reveal?"

Birnier nearly smiled in recognition of the hit.

"Nay; does not beer make the fool to talk foolishness? Dost thou then cast away the banana? Doth not one talk foolishness also who is sick and yet discardeth good medicine because he feareth to poison his belly?"

"Even so," said Bakahenzie obstinately, "does the sick man exorcise the good medicine lest an enemy hath made magic thereupon."

"Then," said Birnier, whose only objection to the ceremony was the delay and the messiness, "let the good medicine be purified."

Bakahenzie grunted and covertly took stock of the tent and equipment visible. Upon the pile of cases stacked just inside the tent his eyes rested some time, but he

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would not make any inquiry. Marufa, too, was occupied in the same manner. Bakahenzie was recalling the previous meeting with Birnier in the village of Mfunyă Mpopo—of that day—when Birnier had not made any attempt to impress the native mind with magic other than the ordinary miracles in the routine of a white man's life.

"When the son of the Snake," inquired Birnier who had learned as much of the hagiocracy as Mungongo knew, "hath taken up the burden, wilt thou then drive Eyes-in-the-hands from the country?"

BAKAHENZIE slowly withdrew his eyes from the fascinating case as far as Birnier's booted foot.

"Hast thou, white man, the magic twig that makes fire?" he demanded.

"Even so."

Birnier took a box of matches from his pocket and struck one. Bakahenzie and Marufa watched him solemnly. Then a lean bronze hand was outstretched. Birnier gave him the box. Slowly and gravely Bakahenzie, the chief witch-doctor, extracted a match, turned it over and over, smelt it, tasted it, regarded it, and struck it on the top of the box.

It was a safety-match; so nothing happened. Birnier, without a vestige of a smile, instructed him to strike it only upon the black piece at the side. That impressed them both. Bakahenzie tried again as directed and succeeded. Holding the match too near the head, he burned the quick of the nail, but not a muscle quivered. He would not even admit that the white man's devil-stick had bitten him. But he was still more impressed.

At a sign from Birnier, Mungongo brought from the tent a nickel-plated revolver and cartridges, which he placed at the feet of Bakahenzie without comment. Apparently Bakahenzie did not notice the action or the gift. He held out the matches to return to the white man. Birnier requested him to keep them. He wrapped up the box in his loin-cloth and fell to a further contemplation of the cases.

He was cogitating upon his impressions. The value of this white had suddenly increased. Evidently he could make small magic. Perhaps he could make as much big magic as Eyes-in-the-hands. Who knew? But then, if that was so, he could make more magic than he, Bakahenzie, could. Bakahenzie saw that if Moon-Spirit were such a great magician he would be difficult or impossible to control.

Naturally Bakahenzie could only understand his own motives in others. His problem now was to discover some means by which he could control Moon-Spirit, make of him a familiar to work to his own ends. Why was he so insistent upon seeing Zalu Zako?

Bakahenzie became more and more suspicious. He saw another reason why the white man must be kept away from Zalu Zako. To refuse to purify him would give a valid excuse that he might not look upon the son of the Snake. But then he did not wish to displease him; also, Marufa could perform the purification.

Again Birnier repeated the question regarding the overthrow of Eyes-in-the-hands. Bakahenzie took snuff, regarded the revolver lying at his feet idly and deigned to reply.

"When that which must be hath come to pass, then shall the children of the Snake eat up their enemies as a lizard eats flies."

"And what is that which must come to pass?"

Bakahenzie sat silent a while as if slightly shocked at the directness of the question; then, as if to humor the white man, he replied—

"When the bridegroom hath taken the bride."

The ceremony of purification could not take place until the following day because such things may not be hurried, and, moreover, various potent charms had to be sent for to the native village. Meanwhile Bakahenzie squatted by the fire, contemplating the nickel-plated revolver and affairs of policy, and opposite him sat the meditative Marufa.

From the hour of the monkey Bakahenzie, unconscious of the small face and anxious eyes watching the camp from the tangle of green, was busy muttering spells over a calabash which held a magic concoction composed of the entrails of a white goat, certain herbs and the eyes of a black wildcat.

When the roof of the forest was a patterned ceiling against an incandescent glow, Birnier stripped to the waist and submitted himself to the hands of the wizard, who, after scattering the feathers of a

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scarlet parrot into the calabash, smeared the left breast, the forehead and the right arm of the white man to the accompaniment of an incantation.

These insignia and specifics he must not remove for three suns; nor could he be permitted to look upon the semidivine Zalu Zako until whatever evil influence his strange body might possess, should have been exorcised by this powerful medicine.

To sit around half nude in such heat was no arduous undertaking, but to sleep without rubbing off the concoction was another matter; also, the perfume thereof was not pleasing to the nostrils of a white man. But Birnier accomplished the feat by smoking excessively and by marking with a pencil the various nostrums recommended by the amiable Burton, many of which were hardly less disagreeable than Doctor Bakahenzie's prescription.

That worthy's slaves had erected a hut for him nigh to the tent, in the door of which he squatted throughout the day, usually with Marufa beside him, with ever a contemplative eye upon his victim—an eye which Birnier was sure was eagerly seeking some excuse to plead that he had inadvertently rendered the magic impotent and must accordingly have the ceremony repeated.

Amused by the ridiculous sight he presented plastered over with this filth, Birnier made Mungongo, whom he had taught to operate a camera, take a photograph of him which would entertain Lucille as well as be of scientific interest. Bakahenzie and Marufa watched this performance from beside the fire with amazement, for they imagined that the camera was some kind of a gun.

When they heard the click, they grunted as if expecting the white man to fall dead. Birnier, of course, knew the universal native belief in the picture being the soul or one of the souls. He summoned Bakahenzie and Marufa and showed them a photograph which, after some difficulty they recognized as Mungongo.

"*Eh!*" grunted a warrior. "Indeed is Mungongo the slave of the white man; for hath he not imprisoned his soul?"

Mungongo laughed. Yet he believed it as implicitly as any of his compatriots, for said he:

"It is a wise man who hath that which is his always within his hand, even as Moon-Spirit hath the soul of his favorite wife with him always so that she may not be unfaithful unto him."

"*Eh!* He is wiser than the Banana Eater!" grunted the warrior in admiration.

Birnier's training to control his features was strained in the effort not to express surprize. For one moment he could not imagine from what Mungongo had derived this astonishing statement. Then he recollected that the boy had seen a photograph of Lucille among his papers.

AFTER this successful demonstration of his sophistication Mungongo was anxious that Moon-Spirit give an exhibition of his magic to dumbfound the chief witch-doctor, desiring most ardently to work the phonograph, to operate which he had learned. But on reflection Birnier decided that it was not his policy to make his thunder too cheap.

Each evening, as the last subtle violet quivered in the trees, had Bakuma glided from the shelter of the undergrowth under the flap of Birnier's tent, where she had lain until the first tint of dawn on the foliage of the forest. Birnier had wished her to leave the camp for some village until Bakahenzie had returned to his village, but Bakuma had frantically pleaded to remain, knowing that the craft were seeking her throughout the country since Bakahenzie's latest interview with mighty Tarum.

But upon the third day, as Birnier was seated reading philosophically at his tent door, the inevitable happened. A loud outcry arose and from the tangle of creepers started the lithe figure of Bakuma, who darted past him into the tent. For a moment there was silence. But Birnier guessed what the matter was. Bakahenzie emerged from the wall of green and cried out in a loud voice. Instantly the warriors around leaped to their feet and broke out into great clamor.

Mungongo, busy with the cooking-pots, rushed to Birnier's side, gesticulating wildly. Inside the tent crouched Bakuma. Toward Birnier advanced Bakahenzie and the warriors, whose dilated eyes and spears in their hands betokened that Bakahenzie had stirred their deepest feelings of terror and murder. Birnier smoked placidly, neither stirring nor permitting a sign of their presence to cross his features.

Mungongo, startled out of his confidence

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in the Moon-Spirit, excitedly bade Bakuma go forth. Bakahenzie, stopping in front of the white man, he broke into a harangue, bidding him to give up Bakuma, whose sacrilege in breaking the magic circle, even as he had said, had brought the terrible Eyes-in-the-hands upon them; that the welfare of the tribe depended upon her sacrifice to the angered Unmentionable One even as she had been doomed; and threatening that they would take the insolent white man whose magic was as water and sacrifice him as well, as was desired by the spirit of Tarum.

The longer he spoke the more excited he grew. Motivated by the sudden conviction that the sacrifice of Bakuma and the slaughter of the white would really restore him to his lost prestige and remove at the same time the problem of controlling a superior magician who threatened to become his rival, Bakahenzie began to work himself up into the necessary state of prophetic hysteria.

Cowering against the camp-bed, Bakuma whimpered with terror; Mungongo incoherently begged Moon-Spirit to give up the girl. Not a muscle moved upon Birnier's face; nor even did his eyes turn in the direction of the menacing crowd, who, with uplifted spears, joggled each other around Bakahenzie. Birnier knew that it was a supreme test of nerve; he knew that any attempt to snatch a rifle, or a movement of any sort, would precipitate action on their side.

He had no intention of surrendering the girl to a hideous fate, and also he saw in the incident that if Bakahenzie were to triumph over him now not only would his prestige with the natives be gone forever, but that his fate would be surely sealed. Slowly, exaggeratedly, as if he were alone, he killed a mosquito upon his bare right chest and lighted his pipe anew.

Bakahenzie advanced a step, followed by the warriors. His voice had reached the falsetto timbre. Mungongo lost his head entirely and, seizing Bakuma, began to drag her out of the tent. Birnier turned his head leisurely toward him. Said he very loudly:

"It is not seemly to kiss a woman in my presence, O Mungongo! Let her be, for I will buy thee one."

Mungongo ceased to pull at Bakuma's arms and stared as if paralyzed. Birnier saw the eyes switch in a terrified glance at the warriors behind him and heard Bakahenzie's hysterical yell to kill.

For one moment he thought that indeed it was all over. Before he could reach the rifle a dozen spears would be in his back. He sat motionless, the "Anatomy of Melancholy" still in his hand, and watched the gage of Mungongo's eyes. Bakahenzie's voice rose to a scream. Suddenly Birnier wheeled round in his chair, snatched up the pencil, and staring hard at them, began to sketch faces on the open page of the book.

At the sight the warriors ceased their shuffling dance; they were arrested with the spears in their hands in as many poses. Bakahenzie's scream was stoppered as if by a hand. In the silence their heavy breathing rivaled the twitter and hum of the forest. Birnier sketched furiously, glaring portentously from the group to the paper. Bakahenzie took a step forward, a nervous step, and yelled—

"Kill!"

But his voice released those of the warriors. In one loud shout they cried:

"He bewitches us! He bewitches us!"

As Birnier bent his head to make another magic mark upon the magic book he heard the rush of feet.

"They have fled!" screamed Mungongo, still clutching Bakuma.

Birnier sighed and dropped his pencil as he glanced up. Bakahenzie and the warriors had disappeared.

XVI

IN HIS favorite seat by the door of his hut sat Zalu Zako waiting as patiently as only a native can to see the white man, symbol of a subconscious hope. The fact that Bakuma had not been found by the emissaries of the bloodthirsty Bakahenzie evoked a sensation of pleasure which was expressed merely in a feeling of well-being.

Of her in person he thought consciously little; his attitude was much as a white lover who might discover his loved one to be a sister and hence by consanguinity lost to him forever—a terrible fact of fate; but, lacking the sentimental inhibition, he did not disguise the death-wish because she was lost to him.

Desires are simpler in the savage, yet

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the driving motives are the same as in the "cultured" ex-animal overlayed with generations of inhibition-tabus, which form complex strata, making the truth more and more difficult to recognize. Yet, of course, from that very obfuscation of motives arises civilization and art.

Then from the blue depths of the humid green came a great outcry, answered by the shrilling tremolo of the women in warning.

"Eyes-in-the-hands!" grunted Zalu Zako, voicing the perpetual fear of the camp as he leaped for the gun which Golden-Mouth had sent him.

Above the medley of sounds arose an articulate cry:

"He hath bewitched our souls! He hath bewitched our souls!"

Zalu Zako paused and listened, replaced the gun and squatted, resuming his dignity before the first man made entrance. For a few moments the shrilling of the women and the wild jabber continued. Then entered a slave followed by a warrior who, excitedly falling upon his knees, gasped out:

"He hath bewitched our souls! He hath bewitched our souls! Our spears were blunted by his magic! Our swords were turned by the wall of his soul! He is a mighty magician!"

"Of whom speakest thou, fool?"

As Zalu Zako put the question, the tall figure of Bakahenzie stalked slowly into the courtyard. The warrior rose and fled at a command from Zalu Zako. Bakahenzie greeted him gravely and very elaborately took snuff in order to show how casual the matter was. When he had meticulously restored the stopper of twisted leaves he announced slowly:

"As I have prophesied, the breaking of the sacred circle hath delivered us into the hands of the false magician, Eyes-in-the-hands. The daughter of Bakala is even now at the camp of the white man whom they call Moon-Spirit."

"*Ehh!*" commented Zalu Zako.

"The brother of Eyes-in-the-hands hath taken her in concubinage," continued Bakahenzie.

Zalu Zako made no response. Marufa grimly approached and squatted beside them.

"Even as I have prophesied," commented Marufa who never failed to seize an opportunity of suggestion.

"I bade him render up the Bride of the Banana; but she hath bitten his soul in his sleep. He held her in his arms. He breathed upon her so that she would not obey. The magic of this brother of Eyes-in-the-hands hath indeed rotted the livers of our people, for they fled like young jackals."

"*Eh!*"

Zalu Zako stared cautiously at the compound wall; Marufa regarded Bakahenzie's left knee with interest. For fully five minutes no word was said; then Bakahenzie portentously:

"Tarum demands the brother of Eyes-in-the-hands, this Moon-Spirit, for if one be taken then will the other, Eyes-in-the-hand, wither away and the Unmentionable One will be revealed."

"Thou hast spoken!" assented Marufa.

But Zalu Zako continued to stare blankly at the wall. His mind was aflame for Bakuma—Bakahenzie had no suspicion of Zalu Zako's passion, yet the fear of his enmity acted like a douche of water in spite of the fear that the implicit faith in the doctors had been weakened.

But disbelief was not positive enough to stimulate action. However, from the news of Bakuma's proximity he had gotten strength to doubt the efficacy of Bakuma's sacrifice to restore the kingdom, a strength which prompted him to say:

"Who he is that hath said that Moon-Spirit be the twin of Eyes-in-the-hands? Enemies there are even among whites. If he be an enemy of Eyes-in-the-hands and he be a great magician, as they say, then through his magic may not Eyes-in-the-hands be slain?"

"He hath but young words," asserted Bakahenzie stonily.

"But Mungongo, the son of Marula, saith that——"

"Dost thou ask an infant to teach thee to hunt?" retorted Bakahenzie.

"Doth a warrior ask his women to mend his wounds?" added Marufa, putting in a gentle reminder that Zalu Zako was merely a chief and not of the craft.

"He hath been exorcised; so let him be brought and put to the test before me," persisted Zalu Zako.

"That may not be," objected Bakahenzie, "for thou art not yet anointed."

"But that which is necessary hath not yet been done," objected Zalu Zako obstinately. "If he have no magic and his

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heart be not white then let him be doomed for the Feast of the Harvest." And gaining courage he added the royal phrase, "I have spoken."

THE three sat motionless. The silence twittered and hummed. The shadows swelled. Bakahenzie rose slowly and stalked away through the compound. Zalu Zako watched his departure without remark or expression. After an interval Marufa went also.

Another person upon whom the news of the discovery had had a similar reaction was M'Yalu. When the warriors had arrived with their tale, he was seated among his women, whom he roughly dismissed. Upon him even more than upon others had the weakening of beliefs had the effect of a slackening of morals. Until the coming of Eyes-in-the-hands, Bakuma had appeared lost to him as effectually as if she had been buried. Now the tabu of her doom was still further loosened, releasing the primitive desire to go forth and seize her.

Such action was, of course, arrested by fear of the consequences from his fellows, to whom the tabu was still real, and of the white man Moon-Spirit. M'Yalu could never overcome the fiat of the witch-doctors while he remained with them. Yonder . . . His decision to go with Yabolo and Sakamata was clinched, but he would take Bakuma with him.

Straight to the hut of Bakahenzie, who seemed to be expecting him, stalked Marufa. Marufa squatted solemnly near to him. These catastrophic events had caused the general unrest which had loosened the discipline of superstition. Now Zalu Zako had become refractory, had mutinied.

Bakahenzie, more and more irritated by the dwindling of his authority, was uncertain and worried over the choice of policy. He could not play traitor by going over to Eyes-in-the-hands because he knew clearly that with him, however well he was received and treated, he would not have supreme power as he had had. Yet the fear that the magic of Moon-Spirit would eclipse his own and, as with Eyes-in-the-hands, that he would not have control, had decided him in favor of extermination. Hence the excuse seized to attempt to kill Birnier for protecting Bakuma.

There are two types of magicians: those who are conscious hypocrites and are successful, and those who are gulled by their own fakes; for he who makes magic must be ever ready with an explanation of failure, and very ingenious in the making, so that the fool who believes in his own medicine is as much astounded at failure as the enraged victim.

Bakahenzie and Marufa, of course, belonged to the first class; yet being of their particular mental development, they were possessed of beliefs just as deep as the most credulous layman. That the wizard personally of his own individual power could slay an enemy by incantation even they did not believe; but that the spirit of the Banana or of other inanimate object could so do, they believed most profoundly.

Their creed was a form of pure animism; the storms, the winds, the lightning, certain trees, rocks, rivers had separate and conscious souls; other inanimate objects not included in an arbitrary list had unconscious souls, each and every one capable of doing mischief or of good. Hence the essence of religion lay in the act of imploring the good offices of the most powerful spirits or in moments of exasperation of threatening them with dire punishments.

Their hypocrisy lay not in disbelief but in pretending to the people that their intercession with the gods was infallible; they knew only too well that the said gods would seldom incline an ear to the magician.

Of course, nearly every doctor had a slightly different creed as to details, usually resting upon an incorrect deduction from a false premise. One doctor would place all his confidence in the spirit of the Banana —the most popular spirit—and another in the spirit of the River, because out of a dozen times that he had implored aid five "miracles" at least had been vouchsafed. Hence, argued he, the spirit of the River is the true and most powerful spirit.

The arguments of others were equally unsound as they were dominated by some hidden desire; much as reputable scientists, while rejecting phenomena accepted by the populace, cling fatuously to a belief in spooks in order to satisfy a subconscious desire for immortality.

Hence the terror and confusion in the heart of Bakahenzie. To him it appeared that the spirits had deserted him entirely; to him it seemed that perhaps these white men had indeed the true magic, the art of controlling the spirits to their will. It

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was really this terror that had urged him to the destruction of the white man, Moon-Spirit.

Now Zalu Zako had mutinied, and being unaware of the powerful impulse from which Zalu Zako had gotten this sudden strength, Bakahenzie attributed it to the magic influence of Moon-Spirit. At all costs, he argued, must Zalu Zako and the white man be kept apart.

But other pressing points were how to accomplish the slaughter of the white man and what he would do now after the attempt to kill him. Either he would flee, which would be most happy proof to Bakahenzie that he was an imposter and no magician, or he would seek revenge immediately. No other action was imaginable to Bakahenzie. Therefore in such a case the obvious act was to strike the quicker.

He contemplated his colleague without looking at him. What was his attitude? Bakahenzie on general principles was suspicious. If Marufa thought that by supporting the white man he might be able to attain Bakahenzie's overthrow and gain the position of chief witch-doctor he would do it, even as he, Bakahenzie, would have done in his place.

Therefore upon these matters did he talk very guardedly with Marufa, who was unusually uncommunicative. However, after communing with himself in sphinx-like gravity, Marufa assented to the proposal that Zalu Zako be isolated in the god-hood immediately.

SO WAS heard the slow rhythmic beat, which was the summons to the craft to assemble, throbbing in the clammy air. Before the humid shadows had lengthened a hand's breadth were some twenty wizards, greater and lesser, fully dressed in the green feathers of the order, collected within the compound of Bakahenzie. Silently and woodenly they squatted in a half-circle before the chief witch-doctor, each and every one excited by the marvelous stories circulated by the warriors returned from the camp of Moon-Spirit, which said stories amply corroborated the tales of Mungongo.

Those of them who supported Bakahenzie's party believed implicitly, because they wished so to do, in Bakahenzie's "reason" for the impotence of their united magic—that it was because of the breaking of the magic circle by Bakuma. But also were there those who cherished personal ambitions for the head witch-doctorship who were suspicious of each other and of Bakahenzie, each one according to his grade and consequent knowledge in the craft.

Among these was Yabolo, who had ever been Bakahenzie's chief enemy and had ever thirsted after the plums that were his. Yabolo was of the premier class; otherwise Bakahenzie would have arranged long since for his removal into the ghostland.

That Eyes-in-the-hands made real magic, Yabolo was convinced; hence his allegiance to one on whom he counted to overset Bakahenzie. But regarding the stories of Mungongo and the warriors he was skeptical —yet rather afraid. They might be true.

When the drum had ceased and they sat in impressive silence, Bakahenzie, squatting motionless on the threshold of his hut, began to mutter incantations and to rock from side to side. Now each and every one of the inner cult knew well enough that this performance was merely ceremony, prescribed by tradition and expediency; yet for that very reason and particularly for the benefit of the lesser wizards, they solemnly accepted it, grunting in chorus as heartily as the others to the chant of Bakahenzie.

As suddenly as dramatically Bakahenzie stopped, with eyes staring upon another world, and fell upon his back to scream and to writhe as realistically as practise assured him. Then, at the proper moment, when the mouth was flecked with foam, did his body become rigid; did the spirit of Tarum speak through the rigid body which lay as in catalepsy, with eyes inverted:

"*Aie! Aie!* I am the spirit of Kintu!
Aie! Aie! I am he who first was!
Aie! Aie! The time of the nuptial draweth nigh!
Aie! Aie! But where is the bride of my choice?
Aie! Aie! Let her be found and prepared!
Aie! Aie! For my lips are athirst for her blood!
Aie! Aie! Let the son of the Snake be anointed!
Aie! Aie! Let him be ready to assist at my feast!
Aie! Aie! I have spoken, I, the father of men!
Aie! Aie! I, Tarum, the soul of your ancestors!"

From the assembly came as ever the low stomach grunt of acceptance, for they were by suggestion infected with the induced hysteria as much as the superb actor himself; they believed; even the members

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of the inner cult were convinced for the moment that indeed the mighty spirit of their ancestors was speaking.

Then slowly with many prodigious grunts and twists did Bakahenzie's soul return to his body. He sat up and after a long pause said impressively:

"What hath he said unto you?"

And Marufa as solemnly related all that he had said.

"*Eh!*" said Bakahenzie tonelessly. "It is even as I have prophesied. These indeed are the words of wisdom. Is it not so, O my brethren?"

Again came the low grunt of consent.

"Let us obey them that these foul spirits may pass and the Unmentionable One return unto his children."

Then, according to custom, did all save those of the inner cult arise and go forth silently. In the heart of Yabolo, as he squatted as expressionless as the others, was satisfaction, for he saw, or thought that he saw, that Eyes-in-the-hands would be pleased with the destruction of any other who might possibly become his rival. And on that principle he saw himself introduced by his relative, Sakamata, to Eyes-in-the-hands as the slayer—or the initiator of the slaying—of his rival, Moon-Spirit.

That Zalu Zako should be anointed king-god suited him as well as the other wizards and for the same reason. Therefore did Yabolo for once raise no objection to the behests of Bakahenzie.

Already from the encampment rose the excited voices of the warriors who had been informed of the finding of the assembly of wizards. But the shadows were long. The forest was even more thickly peopled with spirits than their own parklike country. One of the inner cult of five suggested that the attack be made at dawn. But Bakahenzie, still baited by uncertainty regarding the reality of the magic of Moon-Spirit and the possible influence of Zalu Zako, now that he had apparently developed a will of his own, before they could shut him up in the godhood, was for immediate action. He insisted that they call together the warriors and make special magic to protect them from the forest spirits.

Yabolo, as anxious as Bakahenzie, became his ally in urging that this be done. But Marufa was not at all of this way of thinking. While the fate of Zalu Zako was quite immaterial, his attitude to Moon-spirit was much the same as the young man's, but was prompted by a different motive. He recognized a power possible to utilize for his benefit.

He said no word, listening indifferently apparently to the throbbing of the drums summoning the warriors. When the inner circle broke up, he stalked solemnly to his own hut, but, when he was within, he took from a gourd a special amulet, slipped through a hole in the palisade behind the hut and disappeared into the forest.

XVII

MEANWHILE the object of Bakahenzie's political perplexities was also holding a council of war. Mungongo and Bakuma were divided in opinion.

Mungongo had recovered his complete confidence in Moon-Spirit. After the repulse of the greatest magician and his warriors he became filled with a martial ardor and strongly advocated advancing upon the village immediately. Birnier smiled and considered.

As a matter of fact the plan was not so utterly insane as it appeared. Did he follow up swiftly upon the heels of the terror-stricken warriors, the probability was that the whole camp would be infected by the spirit of panic and bolt. However, he could not see any object to be attained by stampeding the village.

Mungongo, ever eager for a miracle, urged that Moon-Spirit should take upon him the spirit form and descend upon them at night. To his disgust Moon-Spirit refused. So Mungongo retired to the fire and consoled himself by another vivid description of the powers of his master—growing every day—to Bakuma, who sat and listened dully with ever an anxious eye and ear upon the forest trail.

Bakuma was obsessed by terror inspired by the fact that Bakahenzie had discovered her presence; the inherent awe of the witch-doctor, which had been temporarily allayed by the presence of the white, was revived. Only the strict injunctions of Moon-Spirit prevented her fleeing through the jungle to take refuge in some distant shepherd village, although she was convinced that the wizard would soon discover where she had gone. For she was persuaded that

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Bakahenzie had discovered her hiding-place by magic divination, maintaining in proof thereof that she had been, as usual, completely hidden in the undergrowth and that Bakahenzie had walked direct to her.

Birnier foresaw that the situation might become serious. Bakahenzie's attitude, he had seen, was one of suspicion, based, he guessed correctly, on professional jealousy. The finding of Bakuma had probably been much of an excuse to attack the possible rival to satisfy this subconscious death wish.

Now, reckoned Birnier, Bakahenzie would probably be more exasperated than ever at the triumph of the said rival's magic. He would therefore endeavor to play upon this emotion, knowing the strength of the driving force of religious conviction, by advocating the efficacy of appeasing their fallen god by the sacrifice of the girl, and so work them up to an exalted state of fanaticism to attack in force. And an additional stimulant to such action on their part would be a satisfaction in slaying the, to them, brother of the one who had invaded their country.

Another point was that the more a person is scared the less easy it is for him to forgive you; hence the greater resistance to the overtures of amity. Beyond the partially formed idea to overset zu Pfeiffer's petty sovereignty was the strictly professional one of studying from the most intimate view-point a system of tabu of a most complex and illuminating kind. The object therefore solved itself into the best method calculated to win the friendship and confidence of all concerned, particularly of Bakahenzie.

To Birnier, who was not as yet conversant with the system, Bakahenzie seemed of less importance than Zalu Zako, the king-god or potential king-god. But, anyhow, apparently he could not approach Zalu Zako without overcoming the resistance offered by Bakahenzie. To give up little Bakuma to the sacrificial orgy was unthinkable; it would have appeared to him tantamount to sacrificing the girl to attain his ends.

For precaution he placed two of his men as pickets in the jungle to give warning of any possible surprize, although he did not think that they would be likely to renew the attack that day; then, as usual when in difficulties, he retired to his tent for a smoke. As he browsed upon his intimate friend, Dr. Burton, his eyes caught a paragraph upon cures for love melancholy recommended by the amiable doctor.

> Lemnius, instit. cap. 58, admires rue and commends it to have excellent virtues, to expel vain imaginations, devils and to. . . . Other things are much magnified by writers, as, an old cock, a ram's head, a wolf's heart borne or eaten, which Mercurialis approves: Prosper Altinus, the water of the Nile; Gomesius, all sea water, and at seasonable times to be sick . . . the bone in a stag's heart, a monocerot's horn. . . .

He glanced up to see Bakuma squatting disconsolately by the fire, listening to the hundredth repetition of his wonder-working according to Mungongo. The very outline of her rounded back and hunched shoulders, the bronze hands clasped beneath the chin and the misty brown eyes wandering apprehensively toward the trail was a sculpture of melancholy.

He smiled as he reflected that the devils and witches of Chrysostom and Paracelsus were as real to them as the forest spirits and the magic of Bakahenzie to this girl. After all, some of these concoctions sounded as if they should most certainly appeal to Bakahenzie and his brethren of the craft. He wandered off into a reverie, wondering why it was that superstition is so hard to eradicate from the human heart.

In Birnier was a strain of humorous melancholy full of the comedy of the human marionettes made to dance to the legion of devils and bugaboos invented by themselves, and as a stimulant to the dominant scientific absorption was the knowledge that upon him and his fellows depended their only hope of release. Which was the greater reason that Bakahenzie should slay him, he added whimsically, did he but know it.

MOVED by the ever-present curiosity to know what was going on inside other people's minds, he called Bakuma and Mungongo to him, observing the sprightly action of the boy in his faith in him to his good in contrast to the heavy movements of the girl in her lack of faith to make for her good. And when they were come to him and were seated on the ground at his feet he said to Bakuma—

"Wherefor hast thou the black bird within thy breast, O Bakuma?"

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She gazed up at him with the pathetic pleading of a gazelle.

"Do not all birds seek the broken twigs for the building of nests, O Moon-Spirit?"

"Truly, but why are the branches of thy tree rotted and broken?"

"When the ax of the peasant pecks at the roots of the tree dost thou think then that the sap runs the more swiftly, knowing?"

"A devil hath told thee this thing, O Bakuma. When the sun was but a man's height did not a jackal break out of the forest seeking to devour? And yet the chicken was neither hurt nor taken. Are these not white words?"

"Truly, O Moon-Spirit," acknowledged Bakuma reluctantly.

"Was not then the magic of Moon-Spirit more potent than that of thy wizards?"

"Thy words are white," she admitted.

"Wherefore then hast thou ashes in thy mouth?"

Bakuma dismally contemplated Birnier's booted leg.

"*Eh!*" grunted the sophisticated Mungongo. "To those who live on the mountain the crocodile is not!"

"Open thy breast unto me, O Bakuma," said Birnier.

"*Clk!*" she gasped, making a little gesture of hopelessness. "When the sun shines are not the flowers open? But when the night hath come where are the flowers? The deer feed on sweet pastures, but when the shadow of the lion falleth upon the grass hath not a great cloud come over the world?"

"But thy lion hath fled, O Bakuma!"

She gazed at the white man with that curious wonderment at the stupidity of one failing to comprehend the simplest problem. She sighed and then as if with much patience for another's shortcomings:

"Thou hast strong magic, O white man," said she, "stronger magic that makes the magic of Bakahenzie to fall as water against thee. Was the daughter of Bakala not found by divination? Was the daughter of Bakala not revealed to be the Bride of the Banana by divination? There will magic be made even now that the voice of the One shall be obeyed. *Aiec! Aie!*"

The brown eyes welled opals which splashed upon a bronze breast. As Birnier watched her, pity stimulated a desire to relieve this symbol of self-torture and he thought of a favorite passage in the "Anatomy":

> Aye; but we are more miserable than others. What shall we do? Besides private miseries, we live in perpetual fear and danger for epithalamiums; for pleasant music, that fearful noise of ordnance, drums, and warlike trumpets still sounding in our ears; instead of nuptial torches, we have the firing of towns and cities; for triumph, lamentations; for joy, tears.

"Well, Bakuma," said he in English, smiling covertly, "we'll see if we can't get you the nuptial torches!"

Bakuma gazed at him perplexedly with big eyes.

"Already Moon-Spirit begins the incantation of mighty magic," explained Mungongo solemnly.

"*Eh!*" murmured Bakuma expectantly.

Birnier smoked and pondered. The walls of the forest were growing closer in the beginning of twilight.

"The soul of fear," reflected Birnier, "dwells in the unknown. Reveal the god in the machine and the mysteries die."

To Bakuma he said:

"Listen, O Bakuma, I would speak grave words to thee. When thou puttest the seed of the gourd into the ground then within half a moon there appears the plant of the gourd; is it not so?"

"Truly," answered Bakuma disinterestedly.

"Is that then magic?"

"*Eh!*" commented Bakuma, as in astonishment. "Nay; how could that be? Does not the soul of the plant grow even as a child grows?"

"Good. Turn thine eyes to me."

Bakuma watched the operation of striking and lighting a match with indifference.

"Then is this fire which I make done by magic?"

"Truly."

"And thou, Mungongo, what thinkest thou?"

"Moon-Spirit tickles the soles of my feet!"

"H'm." Birnier repressed a smile. "Thou knowest that my words are white?"

"Truly."

"Then I tell thee that this is not done by magic."

"*Ehh! Ehh!*" chorused the twain.

"This thing on the end of this thing which you call a magic fire-twig is made of—of—is made of several kinds of—of earth—found in the earth—and when—and when—" he sought frantically for native words which were not— "the two are brought together—as one strikes a spear."

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Birnier hesitated, finding himself as perplexed as a psychologist endeavoring to explain the abstract working of consciousness in concrete words.

"When one strikes a spear upon a rock there is an eye of fire; is it not so?"

Mungongo's eyes dimly reflected a growing horror. Bakuma stared.

"The magic of Bakahenzie!" murmured Mungongo.

"Already is his soul bewitched!" muttered Bakuma.

"Is it not so?" persisted Birnier.

"Aye," admitted Mungongo, moving uneasily and speaking as if humoring a dangerous lunatic. "It is the eye of the angry spirit of the rock."

Birnier saw his danger and made another effort.

"Even so. Also thou knowest that thou canst make fire by the rubbing together of thy two sticks. Is that then magic also?"

"Truly," continued Mungongo in the same tone. "Can the angry spirit of the souls of the twigs be summoned without the incantations by the keeper of fires?"

"Oh, ——!" groaned Birnier *sotto voce*, but he abandoned the effort to explain combustion. "Thus is it then with these that ye call the magic fire-twigs."

"Even as we have said," asserted Mungongo triumphantly.

BIRNIER lapsed into silent defeat. Bakuma began to edge away. As Mungongo rose came a stifled scream from Bakuma, who sprang to her feet and dashed toward the tent; then, as if recollecting that her saviour had been bewitched by Bakahenzie, fled into the gloom. Mungongo had seized a spear stuck in the earth near to him. Before Birnier appeared the wizened figure of Marufa, who saluted as he squatted in the native manner. Birnier recollected that he had been with Bakahenzie and wondered what he wanted. Mungongo replaced his spear and came to the tent.

"Greeting, O son of M'Tungo!"

Marufa mumbled the orthodox return.

"Thou hast need of Moon-Spirit?" demanded Mungongo, some of his officious confidence in Birnier returning.

"Doth the leopard go to the goat-pen to seek nuts?" grumbled the old man.

He tapped out snuff slowly and grunted. Presently said Marufa—

"Moon-Spirit is the brother of Eyes-in-the-hands?"

"Nay," answered Birnier, wondering at the persistency of this idea. "Eyes-in-the-hands is of another tribe twelve moons distant from Moon-Spirit."

Marufa grunted. Another long pause. Then—

"The magic of Moon-Spirit hath blunted the spears of Bakahenzie?"

"Even so," said Birmier modestly.

"The son of Maliko maketh much magic that the Bride of the Banana be taken from the white stranger."

"The monkey maketh many faces and much noise, but doth he eat up the leopard?"

"The bite of the spear is more deadly than the bleat of a goat," retorted Marufa.

"Doth the wise man eat the heart of a goat to gain courage?"

"The louder the lion roars the less teeth hath he!"

"But only the fool openeth his mouth to see how many teeth he hath!"

"The wise father examineth the grain of the tusks before he selleth his daughter."

"But the wise man seeth the daughter before he offers the tusks!"

"*Ugm!*"

Marufa took more snuff and contemplated the interior of the tent, where a native was lighting a lamp. Birnier reflected. Evidently Marufa had come with an object and had inferred that he had something to bargain about. What was it? Also, he wanted to be sure that he was setting his trap at the right pool.

Birnier decided that he was probably acting on his own initiative and was willing to conspire against Bakahenzie. An impulse to experiment upon him as he had upon Mongongo and Bakuma was repressed, for from the previous effort he had cemented the conclusion that it was impossible to explain rational phenomena to irrational minds; that as ever the adventurous champion of reason would be either regarded as insane or inspired, that which is not comprehended being divine or ridiculous.

However, through Marufa might come a solution of his immediate tactics to gain the good-will of Zalu Zako and the attainments of his scientific object—as well as to give Bakuma the torches he had promised her. Whether I will or no, he reflected, smiling in the dark, must I be either a

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magician or a fool. Fools get nowhere; witch-doctors do, here as elsewhere.

He saw that in order to influence these peoples or any others, he had perforce to work in terms of their own understanding, as the early Christian missionaries practised in their conversion of the Teutons, the Scandinavians and the Britons.

A nucleus of a plan of campaign had been given by Mungongo's impetuous suggestion. He decided to develop it. But through Marufa, who first of all must be impressed with the fact that Moon-Spirit was the greatest magician the world had ever seen. So therefore he called to the native within:

"Oh, Bakombi. Put out the light."

And to Marufa:

"O wise man, thunder hath not always lightning. Behold! I am part of that which is and is not!"

"*Ehh!*"

A grunt of astonishment was wrung from Marufa by the chance mystic phrase, which was interpreted by him as referring to the Unmentionable One.

Then, taking out his metal box of vestas, Birnier moistened one. As he rubbed around his eyes, Marufa, who was expecting a miracle, observed the growing phosphorescence in stoical calm, while Mungongo, delighted at the long deferred proof of his boasts, grunted admiringly.

But when a glowing skeleton hand, which Birnier had prepared behind his back, hovered mystically toward the old wizard's head, he grunted and made a convulsive movement.

"Have no fear, O my friend," came Birnier's voice, "the spirit loveth my friends and destroyeth my enemies."

The grunt had registered the degree of impression that Birnier sought. So he lighted the lamp, bade the excited Mungongo to bring out the phonograph, a machine adjusted with the recording cylinders as well as the reproduction, and, after a successful demonstration of magic, discussed with Marufa a certain scheme to which the old wizard, quick to see the possibilities, afforded many invaluable suggestions.

XVIII

WHEN Zalu Zako was notified of the verdict of the council and of the words of Tarum, the sense of the inevitable returned, extinguishing the spark of rebellion that had been lighted by his love for Bakuma. To Bakahenzie or to the wizards separately or collectively he had had the strength to voice his own desires, but to the veritable voice of Tarum was no resistance dared.

He was bidden to preside by right and precedent at the anointing of the warriors. He did not make any feint at refusal, for his soul was crushed as it had been weeks before by the doom of godhood and celibacy. Beyond the fact that Bakuma would soon be forbidden to him forever, he did not think; desire was strangled.

Even the recollection that Bakahenzie had stated that Moon-Spirit had taken her gave him no reaction. To him, as to his brethren, while physical love is bound up in the control of the universe, because it is vaguely apprehended as a creative force, it is of no importance to the individual lover unless he be guilty of breaking the sexual tabu. If the girl is not a consenting party to the illicit union then she is free; if she is, then it is death to both of them, for, as every one knows, such criminal action endangers the balance of the burden of the world upon the shoulders of the king-god.

Thus it was that the words of Bakahenzie had produced no reaction against Moon-Spirit in the mind of Zalu Zako; indeed afterward he had imagined that if the words were true and that he could yet obtain Bakuma, she might have a son by the white which would obviously bring the marvelous power of white magic to his successor, the next king-god; and possibly, had mused Zalu Zako, dimly straining at such a radical thought against the power of priesthood, make the king a more powerful magician than the witch-doctors themselves.

But he obeyed the mandate and took his place as bidden. Bakahenzie had caused preparation to be begun immediately for the ceremony of making enchantment against the spirits of the night. In the circle of cleared ground which was the temporary Council of Elders, large fires were lighted as the dark wall of the forest drew in upon them.

Bakahenzie squatted before a large calabash specially reserved and enchanted for the making of magic, in which a mess of certain herbs, whose souls were violent haters of the spirits of all trees, rocks, and streams and exceedingly powerful, were to be released from the vegetable bondage

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by stewing that they might be distributed among the warriors for the night assault.

These warriors, some fifty chosen from the following of Bakahenzie and Marufa, squatted obediently within the circle of fires, uneasily casting glances behind them at the deepening shades whence arose the nocturnal chant of the spirits of the forest. In order to insure no interference from malign animals, Bakahenzie caused to be brought a pure white goat, whose throat was cut and bled into the cauldron; for, as one knows, that soul which is white must necessarily fight well against anything that be black.

Yet in spite of this potent magic the warriors grew uneasy, for they felt rather than thought, that if the magic of their witch-doctors had failed against one white why should it succeed against another like unto him? And their faith thus weakened, doubts regarding the efficacy of the same magic against spirits of the forest bred as mosquitoes after rain.

Bakahenzie remarked the uneasiness, but the stronger grew his need to restore the waning confidence in his powers by removing the white; the blood desire had now been transferred from Bakuma to Moon-Spirit as the most effective demonstration possible to him.

The fires smoldered and flickered yellow tongues upon the greens of the warriors' bodies and the blues of the wizards' headdresses. Faint blue vapor swirled round the scarlet feathers above Bakahenzie's graven face as he muttered incantations and stirred the cauldron.

Then, as the drums throbbed and the warriors grunted rhythmically to Bakahenzie's song of enchantment, came a violent squawk of a parrot. The chant ceased. Branches rustled. Every head went automatically toward the sound. Came a low stomach grunt of terror as if an invisible hand had punched them in their solar plexes.

Just in the shadow line where the glow of the fires faintly tinted and greened the curves of his bronze body against the gray of his feathers, appeared the figure of Marufa, his spear lifted on high as he cried out in a loud voice:

"Greetings, O people of the Banana! I bring you tidings of him who is and is not, of him who was lost and yet is come! Behold, I show you a sign!"

Against the gloom his left arm and hand glowed with a strange light. A unanimous "*Eghh!*" rose from the assembled warriors and wizards alike.

"Raise thine ears," continued Marufa, "that the Voice may speak unto you!"

In the silence came a subdued click and commenced a high-pitched voice in the dialect:

"*Aiel Aiel* I am the spirit of Kintu!
Aiel Aiel I am he who first was!"

Whites of eyes glimmered like butterflies in starlight. Nothing was visible. The voice appeared to rise from every direction. The new miracle petrified the limbs of all.

"*Aiel Aiel* My soul is defiled and my children enslaved!
Aiel Aiel My face hath been scratched by an alien claw!
Aiel Aiel I send you the revenge which is white!
Aiel Aiel I send you the One who is bidden!
Aiel Aiel Let that one arise who is I!
Aiel Aiel The mighty One who will blot out the curse!
Aiel Aiel I have spoken, I the Father of Men!
Aiel Aiel I, Tarum, the soul of thy ancestors!"

A peculiar whirr was drowned in the automatic grunt of acceptance squeezed from all the warriors and the wizards by the sacred chant—all except those of the inner circle. In awe sat the warriors of the terrible magic of their doctors which they had once doubted. But the minds of Bakahenzie, Yabolo, and the other two master craftsmen, were stunned. The phenomenon of the glowing hand had they never seen before, but they remembered the stories of Mungongo.

Even was Sakamata, sophisticated to the wonders of Eyes-in-the-hands, impressed and bewildered. Reverential awe for the Unmentionable One was stimulated into activity again in every one of them. Zalu Zako sat petrified, feeling that his doom was upon him, that the Unmentionable One was about to call him to his duty, which invoked fear for the sacrilege he had committed in entertaining such radical thoughts in the immediate past.

But in Bakahenzie was a faint trail of suspicion; how was it that Marufa was thus chosen as the divine messenger? Yet streaks of doubt that perhaps the veritable god was—or gods were—speaking held him silent and immobile.

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"O my brethren, would ye that we seek the voice of the Unmentionable One?" cried Marufa.

"*Ough! Ough!*" grunted the wizards.

MARUFA advanced to the nearest fire and, muttering a spell, took from his loin-cloth the three digital bones of an enemy and proceeded to discover the whereabouts by geomancy. He cast the bones upon the ground. And behold! The fingers pointed in one direction which all about could see.

Oblivious to the stony indifference of Bakahenzie, the old man arose and began to gyrate, mumbling more incantations, toward a thick clump of grass on the fringe of the undergrowth, holding aloft the magic bones in the glowing hand.

Anxiously the assembly watched the skinny figure, half-bent, glide out from the glow of the fires into the blue shadows. A small log collapsed, throwing a red gleam upon the form poised upright before the clump of grass as Marufa cried out—

"Let him who may not be mentioned speak that his children may hear!"

Immediately commanded the high voice, chanting—

"Take up, O Marufa the wise, the pod of my soul!"

Then, in the sight of every man, did Marufa bend upon his knees, muttering, and arise unharmed. Save for the slow turn of each head the better to follow the progress of the magician, no limb nor muscle moved as in silence Marufa bore the like of which had never before been seen—a thing like unto a stone, having an ear almost as large and as erect as an angry elephant, the color of a lion, yet hairless.

"The pod of the soul"—a phonograph with trumpet—did Marufa place within the circle of the fires so that all might see. More incantations did Marufa make, sitting beside it, fearlessly, and then he did caress it as a young man caresses a maid, and came forth again the voice of Tarum.

"Rejoice, O my children, for he that is bidden shall come!
Rejoice, O ye warriors, for he that shall lead you shall come!
Rejoice, O ye wizards, for he that is greater than ye shall come!
Rejoice, O ye women, for he that fertilizes shall come!
He shall eat up your enemies as a lion eateth buck!
He shall make your dead to be seen and your fantoms to talk!
He shall give to your women to have sons of your breed!
He shall give you that which was slain on the hill!
He that walks in a flame in the night!
He that is whiter than the flesh of the baobab!
He shall come forth bearing that which ye seek!
He shall come forth bearing that which is yours!
Hear me, my people, and give voice to your word!"

"*Ough! Ough!*" came the chorus of assent.

Not a limb nor a hand moved among the concourse of warriors and wizards until a new voice, deep, as one who commands, cried out:

"Let the son of Kawa Kendi, the son of Mfunya Mpopo, the son of Mkoffo, move not; neither he nor Marufa, the son of M'Tungo! Unto ye others, we say, depart that we speak in peace with this our son and priest!"

And simultaneously appeared in the gloom of the undergrowth three pairs of eyes, luminous as the glow-worm, vaster than any human; and beside the souls of the dead king-gods were terrible hands. Warriors and wizards, all save Bakahenzie and Zalu Zako, literally leaped for the forest and village in one convulsive bound and grunt.

Zalu Zako had remained upon the ground, green with terror. As Bakahenzie stood upright, his scarlet feathers were fluorescent in the fire glow. The anthem of the forest was only broken by the rustle of branches and the breathing of Zalu Zako and Bakahenzie. A harsh voice cried—

"Begone, Bakahenzie, son of a dog, lest we take thy soul with us!"

The eyes appeared to float nearer; hands pointed menacingly. Bakahenzie boggled, hesitated; then the dignity of his pose melted into the graceful bounds of a fleeing leopard. For the nerves of the professional ghost-manipulator such a phenomenon of the spirits with whom he was supposed to be on familiar terms was too much.

But half-way through a thicket of undergrowth where he could no longer see the terrible eyes, his courage began to return.

To his ears came a new voice chanting:

"Sweeter than warm honey is the scent of my man!
Fiercer than scorpions is the grip of his hand!
Whiter than a spear flash is the gleam of his teeth!
Bakuma rejoices!"

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Peering through the interstices, Bakahenzie could see the gleam of the fire upon the bangles of the son of the Snake and the blue flash upon his spear as he melted into the forest wall.

XIX

THE actual sight of spirits from ghostland, of which hitherto they had only heard, was too much for the nerves of the tribe, already unstrung by the overthrow of the idol and the magic and slaughter of zu Pfeiffer. The warriors had fled like scared poultry to the jungle, up trees, in the undergrowth, and in their huts, where they cowered among their women and slaves, seeing terrible omens and portents in every sound of the forest.

The phenomenon had been just as startling and awe-inspiring to Bakahenzie, ghost-manipulator, as it was to his most ignorant dupe. His belief in ghostland was implicit; but now he had seen what professionally he was supposed to see and converse with on familiar terms. As Zalu Zako disappeared, he continued to listen intently.

Above the slight rustle of the bushes as Zalu Zako moved through the undergrowth rose a feminine laugh. Bakahenzie shuddered at the sardonic chuckle, for, as is well known, female demons are much more malignant than the male. For the space of a chant he remained crouching there, curiosity and the dread of revealing his terror to his fellows tugging at his feet and terror of the demons clutching him around the waist. Save the anthem of the forest no further sound of the ghosts was audible.

Cautiously Bakahenzie wriggled out of his nest and with as much dignity as may be stalked back to the fire. From the village came a slight whimpering. With satisfaction Bakahenzie noted that no one else was in sight. For another space he sat with uneasy eyes and ears upon the forest. Then, gathering courage as nothing happened, he pondered upon what attitude he should assume.

The first to return was Yabolo, who stalked from around a hut and, squatting calmly beside Bakahenzie, nonchalantly proceeded to tap out snuff and to offer some to Bakahenzie, who grunted acceptance and sniffed with even greater indifference. Motionless they continued to sit, and silently Bakahenzie wondered whether Yabolo knew that he too had fled. And Yabolo, who did know, waited for the first move on Bakahenzie's part to retort.

Yabolo, indeed, who had been as panic-stricken as Bakahenzie, was more suspicious in view of the accounts he had heard of the magic of Eyes-in-the-hands. Who knew but this vision might not be another manifestation of Eyes-in-the-hands? And more slowly a similar idea began to occur to Bakahenzie, save that he had in mind the incident of Moon-Spirit's magic in the face of his bravest warriors.

The calmer he became the more was he inclined to give the vision this explanation; such was infinitely more comforting to him than the conception that they had been in truth spirits from ghostland. As the suspicion grew, the wisdom of propitiating this powerful Moon-Spirit became apparent; yet there was present the dread of losing what remained of his autocratic power. The problem was to enlist the white and discover some means of controlling him and his magic.

But to both men the vital question was: what had become of Zalu Zako? There were two possibilities: if the visions had been genuine ghosts then undoubtedly Zalu Zako was no more; but if they had been produced through the magic of a white man then Bakahenzie decided that Zalu Zako and Marufa must be in league with Moon-Spirit. And Yabolo imagined that Zalu Zako had been captured by Eyes-in-the-hands.

To the latter the effect was to strengthen the determination to go over to Eyes-in-the-hands, for if the first possibility was correct the greater need had he of strong magic if real ghosts were taking to walking abroad visibly—and the other case merely proved beyond question the invincible magic of Eyes-in-the-hands.

But to Bakahenzie the reaction was slightly different, for his elemental reason took him a little further than Yabolo by pointing out that in all his wide experience never had spirits taken shape visibly. So the suspicion that they had been due to Moon-Spirit grew and was supported by the recollection of Marufa's unexplained absence and sudden reappearance on familiar terms with the spirits.

The longer he pondered on the strange actions of Marufa the more he became

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persuaded that that wily colleague was acting upon sound information, and so desperate did he become in the tangle of his affairs that he decided to gamble upon that assumption. Magician Bakahenzie began to realize that Marufa had somehow scored a point and that now approached the crux which would determine whether he won back or lost forever that which was the essence of life to him.

Meanwhile the two sat motionless and silent, as if mutually agreeing that no question regarding each other's late movements had better be asked.

According, apparently, to his degree of superstition, returned each of the witch-doctors. When all were come without one word of explanation to each other, Bakahenzie lifted his voice in a high falsetto, bidding the lay warriors to return to hear the voice of the faculty. Reassured by this command, which carried far on the still air, they began to emerge from hut and undergrowth.

The first to arrive was M'Yalu, angry to find the whole assembly of doctors apparently sitting, as if they had never moved, engaged in mystic incantations. M'Yalu had not fled far and from his cranny had seen the flight of Bakahenzie and the departure of Zalu Zako, but he dared not betray the doctors. He squatted sullenly and waited while the remainder of the warriors, of whom many had also seen the general stampede, filed to their places.

When all were assembled, Bakahenzie looked up from his incantations and bade them to listen to what message the faculty—for obvious policy's sake he included the whole of the wizards—had received from ghostland by the three spirits, emphasizing the vision of the spirits as proof positive of the terrible power of the craft.

By reason of the sin committed by one who had broken the magic circle as they all knew, said Bakahenzie, had this wrath of the Unmentionable One come upon them, permitting the incarnation of a demon, Eyes-in-the-hands, to work his will upon them and to make them slaves as were their dogs the Wamungo; and so in the depth of their tribulation he, Bakahenzie, whose magic had been rendered impotent by the betrayal of the Bride of the Banana, had invoked the spirits of the three as they all had witnessed.

"Ough! Ough!" grunted the warriors in assent, although many of them were sorely puzzled to know why the doctors themselves had fled.

Yabolo began to grow restless in his mind, for this was contrary to his policy to allow Bakahenzie to steal all the thunder and condemn the possible source of political power to the level of an evil demon. But he gave no physical sign, save to become engrossed in his snuff-box.

THEN Bakahenzie continued with a long harangue which still urged the necessity of the consummation of the marriage of the Banana and announced that Zalu Zako had been taken by the spirit of his forefathers in order to prepare magic for the eating up of the terrible Eyes-in-the-hands; that, as the voice of Tarum had said, Zalu Zako would return with "that which was slain on the hill—that which ye seek, that which is yours."

For, although Bakahenzie was not sure to what these words referred, he was sagacious enough to know that if Marufa had engineered that scene there must be something at the back of it; and in any case he knew, as does any white medicine-man, that words in mystic phrasing are always soul-satisfying to the credulous, who interpret them in terms of their subconscious desires. Then, avoiding with political sagacity any reference to uncomfortable topics, he dismissed the assembly before any pertinent questions could be asked.

But when Bakahenzie had retired to his hut, presumably for the night, did he, as Marufa had done before him, gird himself with an amulet containing the gall of an enemy killed in battle and a short stabbing spear and sally forth through a hole in the fence to brave the spirits of the forests in his need.

In the village generally sleep was not entertained with enthusiasm by any save those women and slaves who knew not of the great happenings. In the hut of Yabolo were M'Yalu and Sakamata. From the old men M'Yalu received much consolation and advice, but no information as to why the wizards had bolted as fast as the laymen from spirits invoked by their own magic.

Sakamata confirmed authoritatively Yabolo's suspicion that the manifestations

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had been produced through the magic of Eyes-in-the-hands, urging that they lose no time in going to him to make submission. Yabolo had already decided on that course, but M'Yalu refused to give a definite decision as to when he would go. He sat sullenly, saying no word, and eventually departed to his own hut, where he dismissed his wives and continued to brood.

The fear and anger aroused by the anointing of the warriors for the capture of Bakuma had been dissipated by the general panic produced by the ghosts, and afterward he had unconsciously hoped, because he so desired it, that the pursuit of the bride would be abandoned. Hence Bakahenzie's renewal of the chase had angered and frightened him anew. Like all the rest of them, he wondered and pondered upon the fate of Zalu Zako and Marufa.

Marufa, as he well knew, had a black heart and two tongues; therefore was he suspicious of any manifestation with which the son of M'Tungo could be connected. Zalu Zako was wealthy; perhaps he had bribed Marufa to make magic in order to get him away to meet Bakuma and also to rescue her from the tabu. A lover's jealousy is as powerful a driving force as ambition. In this case it drove even M'Yalu to brave the spirits of the night, for at the hour of the monkey did he, too, steal away into the forest.

So it was that, as the patterned roof of the forest was etched in the timid green of dawn, M'Yalu peeped through the gate of the zareba of Moon-Spirit to discover the gaunt form of Bakahenzie squatted by the embers of a fire within a deserted compound. Bakahenzie's quick eyes, on the alert for ghosts or any moving thing, saw him; so M'Yalu coldly advanced and squatted beside him, grunting the formal greeting.

As they sat there silent, M'Yalu's eyes noted the age of the spoor about the compound, the tent-peg holes newly pulled. Now he was sure that Marufa and Zalu Zako were in league with Moon-Spirit, and anger smoldered in his broad chest. At length spoke Bakahenzie casually—

"The Bride of the Banana hath been taken away."

Bakahenzie paused as if weighing his words and added—

"But the feet of spirits are heavy on the land."

M'Yalu grunted. Bakahenzie had an idea, and to M'Yalu was born another about the same instant. Said Bakahenzie, who wished to know the whereabouts of Marufa, Moon-Spirit and company—

"If the marriage of the Bride be not consummated then will the power of Eyes-in-the-hands prevail."

And after a long pause—

"Who will seek the bride?"

M'Yalu remained silent, revolving his own idea in his mind. There remained with him still certain of the awe and belief in Bakahenzie's power and knowledge. So his words threatening the triumph of Eyes-in-the-hands assured and strengthened his purpose, for he thought that if he could accomplish his plan then would Eyes-in-the-hands surely triumph as Bakahenzie predicted. Thus it was that he said—

"O master of Wisdom, give unto me a mighty charm against the evil eye of traitors. Then will I and those that follow me seek the bride and bring her so that which is bidden may be—so that the children of the Banana may triumph."

M'Yalu rose. The two started on the return to the village. On the road Bakahenzie sought to flatter M'Yalu by pretending to take him into his confidence, by adjuring him to secrecy and informing him that he would cause it to be known that M'Yalu, the son of M'Busa, would bring back the Bride of the Banana.

M'Yalu assented gravely. Just before reaching the village, his keen eyes noticed a slight trail from the regular path. Broken, twisted and crushed leaves and strained branches indicated the recent passage of two or three people through the undergrowth.

With difficulty, for the Wongolo are not forest people, he followed it in a semicircle toward the village. A footprint in the slime revealed the track of Zalu Zako or Marufa coming from the fires. M'Yalu grunted, but he said nothing to Bakahenzie or anybody else. That the vision was caused by Moon-Spirit's magic he had no doubt. His estimation of Moon-Spirit's magic increased to the point of fear, yet the smoldering jealousy and desire for Bakuma drove him dreadfully on.

Before the sun was two spans high, M'Yalu left the village with some two

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hundred of his followers, anointed against magic and spirits. The track from the Moon-Spirit's camp was like an elephant's path. Through the steamy heat they followed all day until they came out upon a river near to a village upon the border of the forest. The head man of the village was away with his chiefs and warriors; only women, children and slaves remained.

Zalu Zako, in the company of a white man called Moon-Spirit, Marufa, the wizard, and a girl, had arrived; they had taken three canoes and had left up-stream within a hand's span of a shadow. M'Yalu took all the canoes available and started in pursuit, leaving the rest of his men to follow as soon as they had procured other canoes from the nearest village.

The river was small but deep and flowed swiftly between the vast curtains of the overhanging trees. When the dungeon of the forest was glooming to night, they saw the gleam of a fire. Swiftly and silently they landed, surrounded the camp and, uttering the war-yell, rushed.

But neither Moon-Spirit, Zalu Zako or Marufa they found; only Bakuma, who had been left behind because her sex forbade her to participate in the mysteries of the cult, and some dozen carriers were there, Even the dismal squawk of a *baroto* bird could not damp the relief and joy of M'Yalu. Next morning he dispatched a secret messenger to Yabolo making a rendezvous at a certain village and with a weeping Bakuma in his train set out to gain the rest of his fortune at the camp of Eyes-in-the-hands.

XX

CHANGED was the City of the Snake, the Place of Kings. Upon the site where had been the hive of huts, wrapped in the green arms of the banana plantation, labored under the incandescent sky gangs of prisoners under armed guards upon the building of larger huts laid out in streets, broad and geometrical, and lined with correct ditches for drainage. Upon the outskirts here and there remained charred posts.

Upon the hill of Mkoffo was a palisade enclosing the barracks of two companies of the *askaris* and two guns. No brown cones peeped like candle-snuffers above the sea of green fronds upon the hills of the tombs of kings, but from the sacred hill of Kawa Kendi, commanding the approach to the valley, rose, black against the sky, the triangle of the roof frame of a large bungalow; around the crown of the hill, even as Sakamata had related, was a stout palisade, through which grinned in the sun the muzzles of a Nordenfeldt and a pom-pom; and outside upon a levee strutted rigidly four sentries night and day, a perpetual reminder to the passer-by below of efficient vigilance.

Within was a methodical formation of round huts dominated by a square one; at the far end, and in solitary grandeur beneath a rough-hewed flagpole, was a large green marquee tent, the temporary quarters of the *Kommandant.*

Beneath the tent veranda sat zu Pfeiffer with a towel, upon which was scattered inch lengths of his blonde hair, tucked around his neck. Sergeant Schultz sheared deftly with clippers, like a reaper in a field of corn. When he had completed the final trimming behind the ears, he stood aside with the air of an artist viewing his work.

"Is that pleasing to your Excellence?"

Zu Pfeiffer ran a hand around his skull.

"*Ja;* that is better and cooler, Sergeant."

With a professional air Schultz whisked around the *Kommandant's* neck with a light brush, untucked the towel and brushed him down. As zu Pfeiffer rose, Bakunjala appeared with a broom of small branches and a pan and proceeded to sweep the earthern floor. Schultz neatly folded up the towel, placed it on the chair and stood at attention.

"Is that all, Excellence?"

"*Ja,* Sergeant. Take a cigar."

"Thank you, Excellence!"

The sergeant selected one, saluted and departed. Zu Pfeiffer lounged in a basket chair. The usual water-bag and syphon were suspended at his elbow above sparklet and brandy bottles and a box of cigars. Littered around him on the floor were papers, envelopes and documents. On his wrist sparkled the jeweled bracelet, and between fingers, on which were the large diamonds which had earned him his native name, was an official document bearing the imperial eagles.

As he read, he smiled and patted his left mustache approvingly. Officially, the authorities would not comply with his request, made before leaving Ingonya, for two more

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companies of *askaris* with white non-commissioned officers and two more guns; but unofficially he was informed that they would be supplied later and that the authorities were pleased.

He picked up a private letter and reread it. Then he smiled again, a sneering twist remaining at the corner of the mouth. Always he was informed by sympathetic friends and an agency of the whereabouts and doings of Lucille. On the first of August she had been due at Wiesbaden.

He threw the letter on the table with an irritable gesture and scowled as he drank. The arrival of the mail always brought vivid regrets for the glories and comforts he was missing by being condemned to war with "dirty swines of niggers." That was part of the penalty he had had to pay for being a gentleman in a "land of dollar-grubbers," yet a matter to be written up against the account of Lucille, the *entzückende* Lucille. He must have been *verrückt*, he reflected savagely. Yet the delicate lips softened in ludicrous contrast to the brutal outline of the cropped skull.

The arrival of the spotless Bakunjala disturbed his reveries, reveries which were apt to rankle until among his satellites went the word that the Eater-of-men was possessed by the demon of Bakra once more.

After he had delicately finished a small cup of *café cognac* and a cigaret, Sergeant Schultz strutted up, saluted and at a nod from zu Pfeiffer sat upon a camp-chair and handed a document to the *Kommandant*, a roster of the chiefs who had submitted, with the approximate number of their followers. Officially there were fifteen chiefs with some six thousand followers who had nominally accepted the new rule, each one of whom had had to leave as hostage for his fidelity a son who lived under guard in the village beneath the guns.

ZU PFEIFFER needed the extra companies and white men to establish stations at various points with the object of gradually extending the sphere of military occupation. Zu Pfeiffer left nothing as far as he could foresee to chance; his maxim was to conserve his force to the utmost, to accomplish the most at the least possible cost in men and material.

The policy of terrorization—*Schrecklichkeit*—was based on the reasoning that eventually it saved both the conqueror and the conquered bloodshed and trouble, for, if they were not so impressed with the fact that all resistance was utterly useless, they would resort to sporadic risings which would entail more slaughter on both sides.

Zu Pfeiffer, acting on the teachings of the German masters, sought to make war psychologically as well as militarily, geographically as well as economically. Hence his dramatic step in the overthrow of the idol in person and the care with which he planned to impress each chief and native with his omnipotence and magic.

This system of the application of political science as well as of military science, of course, was sound, save for the inevitable and racial error—the lack of sufficient imagination to realize the unknown quantity of chance, the failure to realize that war—as Foch has said—is not a science but an art, the usual mistake of the militarist who will never admit the artist-poet to his counsels; which error has been demonstrated by cases of genius such as Napoleon and Leonardo da Vinci, who were both mathematicians and artists.

In zu Pfeiffer's case, as in others of his type, the motivating force was not bourgeois greed of material gain for himself—gain which he could afford to despise in his wealth and to strive for which would have been contrary to the code of a gentleman as he saw it.

In the case of his rival, Birnier, he had not hesitated for a moment to attempt to destroy him, but he would not condescend to touch with one finger any of his goods; for that reason had he given permission to the corporal to take Birnier's equipment so that he would not even be contaminated by the possession of them, a temperamental error again which had led to Birnier's escape.

The driving power, as in his caste and tribe, was love of power to an excess, masked with portentous solemnity under the cloak of benefiting these people and the peoples of the world, forcing them to have broad streets and sanitary arrangements, forcing them to laugh, to sing, and be happy whether they would or no. An urge which is the curse of the world, the impulse to interfere in other people's affairs, to teach them, to make them to know the

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true god, the right way of living, the right way of doing everything from the rising of the first sun of consciousness to that happy snuff of twilight when our planet will try to enforce its orbit upon some other planet.

Across the ford of the river on that hot afternoon came a puckered-faced Bakuma in the train of carriers and slaves of M'Yalu, who with Yabolo was coming to make obeisance to the Eyes-in-the-hands under the protection of Sakamata. To Bakuma there was no joy in the prospect of the sight of her old home; the bitter taste of the oleander was in her mouth as she trudged despondently with downcast head.

But the breast of M'Yalu was filled with the song of the cricket. The vague fears that had haunted him throughout the journey of being overtaken by the magic of Bakahenzie or his emissaries in person for the sacrilege of stealing the Bride of the Banana, which fear had preserved Bakuma from violence, began to evaporate at the sight of his home, where now dwelt a new god more powerful than any. He was now about to gain protection, honors and incidentally the ivory which his anxious eyes pictured still within his hut.

But when they broke from the banana plantation upon the site of the village was a mighty grunt elicited from the chests of M'Yalu and Yabolo at the vision of the half-completed street of large huts.

"*Eh!*" quoth Sakamata. "Is not the way of the Mighty One more wonderful than he who is gone? Behold, he maketh a city like unto that of his people, a city of gods!"

But M'Yalu had no admiration to spare, for to him the alleged beauty thereof was fogged by the fact that his own huts were but blackened ruins. The next moment M'Yalu, in spite of his native dignity, started as one of those uniformed keepers of the coughing monsters barked at them magic words.

Sakamata replied. Yabolo and M'Yalu stiffened as they observed the cringe of the shoulders as he fumbled hastily within his loin-cloth and presented a piece of hard substance the color of blue clay, with magic marks upon it. The demon grunted at them to proceed as if talking to a slave. Followed in file the rest of the caravan.

As Bakuma passed, the uniformed demon standing with sword and the gun with seven voices upon his shoulder, grinned and, grunting in a strange tongue, stepped forward and spun her round by the shoulders.

Bakuma cried out in terror and the carriers gasped fearfully. M'Yalu and Yabolo turned. The scar on M'Yalu's face twitched with rage as he raised his spear. But Sakamata clung to his arm as the soldier, grinning, raised his rifle in their direction. Bakuma ran on. The man laughed and turned his back to them, calling out something that the Wongolo could not understand.

"*Eh!*" commented Sakamata indignantly. "The dog hath eaten poison-grass! We will tell his words to Eyes-in-the-hands, and he will be beaten until he seeth not!"

M'Yalu, slightly mollified by this promise, strode on in silence, bewildered and resentful, wondering at these strange things in the camp of the new god. In a large open space resembling a public square was a big, unfinished hut; the guest house, Sakamata informed them, for those who sought an audience with the Invincible One. As they squatted on the floor waiting patiently until the sun was two hand's-breadths above the hill for the appointed time, food and beer were brought to them by a Wongolo slave, for zu Pfeiffer was careful to foster the feeling of class distinction.

Sakamata duly held forth upon the generosity of the Eyes-in-the-hands, the wonder of his works and presence; but his words were received in unsympathetic silence, for the incident on the road had wounded the dignity of both chief and witch-doctor; it had raised dim fears and forebodings.

At length a strange sound rang out on the still hot air, which was, Sakamata explained, the signal that the Eyes-in-the-hands would receive his guests. Leaving Bakuma squatted in the lethargy which appeared to be habitual to her now, the three slowly mounted the sacred hill, marveling greatly at the black triangle of the roof of the new temple, gazing with veiled suspicion at the gleaming brass fittings of the coughing monster in the great gate, and eyeing uneasily the double lines of uniformed devils, their bayonets flames in the sun, who were drawn up outside the green palace of Eyes-in-the-hands.

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ON EACH side of the tent door stood the two tallest men in the companies, coal-black forms which towered above the slighter build of the Wongolo as rigid and as silent as trees. Through this terrifying guard walked Sakamata, leading his two compatriots, already startled and depressed. Immediately within Sakamata fell upon his knees.

Before them at the end of the tent sat zu Pfeiffer in the full dress of his regiment, plumed helmet, blazoned uniform and sword; and, erect beside him, stood the two sergeants, Schultz and Ludwig, in full parade uniform. Above them was a blaze of red, white and black and in the midst another splash of color.

But ere this vision had penetrated their unaccustomed brains, had risen the voice of Sakamata, bidding them to kneel likewise. Bewildered and awed they obeyed. Then came a voice saying—

"Rise; approach, O chiefs!"

Accordingly they rose and, following Sakamata, advanced and squatted, their eyes fascinated and held by those myriad gleams of magic "eyes" on hand and wrists. Then the interpreter, standing at attention, spoke this harangue tonelessly and rigidly:

"Greeting and welcome, children of the Banana! Eyes-in-the-hands, who is known to the people where the sun rises as the Eater-of-men, hath come from afar, the messenger of a greater than he, the Lord of the World, the Earthquake, the World-Trembler, who eats up whom he pleases, whose eyes see all things, whose sword slays all things, whose breath is the rain, whose voice is the thunder, whose eyes are the lightning, whose frown is the earthquake, whose smile is the sun, whose ear is the moon, whose eyes are the stars, whose body is the world! Look upon one soul of him which he hath sent that ye may worship and know him!"

Zu Pfeiffer raised the jeweled hand above his shoulder as the interpreter ceased. From the medley of colors to the unaccustomed native eyes grew slowly the form and face of a white man as strangely clothed as Eyes-in-the-hands, covered with amulets and charms upon his breast. For four minutes by his wrist-watch zu Pfeiffer sat silent and as frozen as his sergeants. Then secretly he pulled a string.

"*Ehh!*" grunted Yabolo and M'Yalu involuntarily, for before them appeared, even as Sakamata had related, the two souls of every person present.

Bewildered and stunned at such a manifestation of magic, they slowly turned from one to the other. As silently as they had appeared did the visions vanish.

"O son of M'Yana, tell the tale of the possessions of these thy friends and allies," commanded zu Pfeiffer.

Sakamata obeyed. But as he recited the approximate number of M'Yalu's followers, the number of his oxen and goats, the number of fine tusks and small, the number of slaves, wives, concubines and children, the countenance of M'Yalu grew uneasy. Had he known that he would be required to render an account, he would have computed at half the actual amount, whereas, in order to impress Sakamata with his importance, he had exaggerated to almost double what he had ever possessed.

Then, as Sakamata proceeded to perform the same service for Yabolo, relating, by arrangement with his relative, about one-third of his possessions, M'Yalu observed in a corner a man making magic upon a table—a native clerk keeping tally. For zu Pfeiffer kept an exact record of every chief's alleged possessions as given by Sakamata and corroborated—by silent consent—by the said chief so that when afterward any discrepancy with the said list was discovered the chief was proven a liar and subject to the punishment of further confiscation as such, as well as enhancing the reputation for omniscience of Eyes-in-the-hands.

At the end of the recitals of property, M'Yalu was told—not asked—to bow his head to the ground in token of allegiance. He obeyed in bewildered fright, which changed to rage when he was informed that one-third of his property must be rendered to the august being before him without delay, that he was to be ready at a summons to produce a given number of warriors and that his small and only son was immediately to be placed in the "village of sons of chiefs" as guaranty of obedience and good behavior.

In a mist of fright, anger and awe he sat motionless. Sakamata proceeded to relate the doings of Zalu Zako and those who had remained faithful to him. Zu Pfeiffer had fairly precise information from spies of the movements of the Wongolo upon the return of Sergeant Ludwig, who had burned

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the village of Yangonyana, but shortage of men and the serious disadvantage of traversing and fighting in the forest had prevented him from sending another punitive expedition.

Also had he heard of a white man who had passed through the country. Sakamata, nativelike, eager to placate, asserted that he had actually seen the white man who was called Moon-Spirit. And from the same motive, ever wishing to flatter, he announced positively that he had no magic at all, was dark and small and a trader, the only kind of white man other than the military seen at Ingonya, or whom Sakamata had ever seen.

Zu Pfeiffer stroked his left mustache and reflected. He had at first thought that the man might possibly be Saunders, a trader who was in his pay, but now decided that he was probably some new trader or hunter from the Tanganyika district. He instructed Sakamata that he was to send a messenger to this white man and command him to come to him immediately.

Then, waving the imperious, jeweled hand, he dismissed them. But, noticing the sullen countenance of M'Yalu, he drew Sergeant Schultz's attention, ordering him to mark the man and if the tax was not forthcoming quickly to have him given fifty lashes. Silently Schultz saluted.

So it was that M'Yalu, sulky, smoldering with anger against Sakamata, for he felt that he had been betrayed into a trap, followed Yabolo out into the sun. Not only had he not gotten back his ivory left in the village, but he was ordered to pay much more than he actually possessed.

But when he had descended the hill to the guest house he came to the weeping and wailing of his people who informed him that Bakuma had been taken away by three of the demon-keepers of the coughing monsters.

XXI

IN THE village of Bakahenzie was discontent.

The sudden desertion of Sakamata, Yabolo and three other chiefs had corroborated his suspicions of the unfrocked priest. That Sakamata had been preaching open sedition, he had known—yet Bakahenzie was in the position of many a president or prime minister, for he feared to put his own position in jeopardy by having the offender removed expeditiously.

This treachery, which happened at the time when M'Yalu should have either returned or sent a messenger, implied another grave error. All the information he could gather was that M'Yalu had returned through the village by the river with the girl Bakuma, some prisoners and some of the white man's equipment on his way to the southeast; but no one apparently had seen Zalu Zako, Marufa, or the white man.

Bakahenzie was at a loss to discover a plausible theory to account for M'Yalu having kidnaped Bakuma, who could not be of any political importance to him in going over to Eyes-in-the-hands, but rather would prejudice him seriously with the rest of the tribe for the sin of sacrilege in taking the Bride of the Banana. Shrewd judge of his compatriots though he was, the possibility of a love motive never occurred to Bakahenzie. A dominating passion in an individual for any particular female was rare in the native world; attractive wives or concubines were chosen and bought as one buys a goat or an ox. Bakuma was to him merely a good-looking girl well-selected by Marufa for the orgy of the Harvest Festival, a girl being preferred to a male sacrifice.

Bakahenzie was distraught. He knew that he had not the authority to prevent further desertions; he did not know how far Sakamata's propaganda had penetrated; he did not know what Zalu Zako, Marufa and the white man were going to do. Like many wise statesmen before and after him he adopted a policy of "wait and see."

To provide an exciting distraction to keep his constituents amused and from thinking too much, he adopted another political tactic of abusing some one vigorously. He called a meeting of the faculty and the warriors and there solemnly denounced M'Yalu as a traitor and accused him of the crime of having abducted the Bride of the Banana and consequently responsible for the continuance of the misfortunes of the tribe.

The move was successful, inasmuch as it afforded discussion and absorbed wrath for two whole days. Various chiefs proposed as many plans. But none were taken, for each and all were discontented and quarrelsome, as fearful of Eyes-in-the-hands as they were of the wrath of their tribal god. Many of them were impressed

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by the propaganda of Sakamata and Yabolo and the impunity with which Yabolo and Sakamata and company had quietly gone over to the enemy.

Meanwhile Bakahenzie squatted in oracular silence, murmuring incantations that were prayers to the Unmentionable One interlarded with promises of the things he would accomplish for the said deity, with solemnity and sincerity, for he felt that the result of Marufa's intrigue with the magician Moon-Spirit would mature very shortly. What that would be, he had no notion; only did he strain every nerve to be alert, when the time did come, to snatch from Marufa the lead that wily old man had gained.

On the third day two other chiefs followed in the wake of Yabolo. Bakahenzie made no comment, but he realized that before long unless the unknown happened he would be unable to retain any of his followers—that his one chance lay in playing for time. In his despair did he begin to contemplate an alliance with Marufa, even if he had to take a subordinate role—which would at any rate give his ally time to help checkmate his colleague.

On the next day, when yet another chief and his followers departed, Bakahenzie knew that they were like a herd of goats and that to stop the stampede he must adopt desperate measures.

To quell the restlessness which murmured ominously throughout the camp, he called another meeting as soon as the news had come of the last desertion. While the drum tapped out the summons, Bakahenzie sat muttering his most impressive spells alone, endeavoring to discover a plausible excuse for some sort of excitement to distract the public mind.

Slowly and sulkily the remainder of the brethren of the craft and those lay chiefs that were left assembled within the circle of fires. Squatted in the prescribed order, they eyed the figure of Bakahenzie in his red and green feathers, mumbling incantations, with doubt and disfavor. Indeed, Bakahenzie seemed to them as the symbol of the fallen god and a past régime; impotent and as mistaken as they were. In each and every one of them were suspicions and fears growing like weeds after tropic rain that he had made an error in not propitiating the new god in time, an impulse which required but a few hours' growth to propel them out to the southeast after Sakamata and the others.

As they watched in silence, Bakahenzie was aware of the states of their minds toward him, and he grew the more perplexed in his search for a plausible excuse for an entertainment sufficiently exciting to stifle their discontent. Sagaciously he decided that any more communications from Tarum would be unwise in the present atmosphere. An idea of a revelation by divination to appoint another substitute for Bakuma as the Bride of the Banana and thus thrust forward a reason for an orgiastic feast—as there was now no Yabolo to object—was abandoned because such an orgy was exclusive to the craft and would serve to exasperate the lay chiefs.

His resource suggested a method. Suddenly, without ceasing the continuous incantations, he uttered a piercing yell and fell sideways as in the manner of one about to receive a communication from Tarum; but instead of the habitual seizure and cries and groans he lay rigid and silent. The divergence from the usual distracted the attention of the audience.

The fires flickered and danced to the insectile anthem as for twenty minutes or more he lay there as one dead. But at the first flutter of movement among the doctors he sat up with closed eyes and called out in a loud voice—

"That which is and must be, shall be!"

Intuitively he had followed the precept of witch-doctors the world over of saying nothing at all in such a way that as many interpretations may be deduced as there are listeners. Each and every doctor and chief accordingly saw in these mystic words, as Marufa had done in the chance phrase of Moon-Spirit, that which he was most urged to do. Bakahenzie had accomplished his temporary object. Once more he cried out—

"Let the children of the Banana be as the wildcat at the fish-pool that that which I have prophesied may come to pass!"

The charging of the air with the familiar suggestion of magical doings gripped the audience and forced from them the conventional grunt of acceptance.

Bakahenzie began again to mutter incantations. He had, he knew, averted the immediate danger for at least another sun—or perhaps two. Now was there only to

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wait and see. But Bakahenzie, as all great men, had the distinct vein of luck that follows the bold. Even as they squatted there thoroughly worked up for the reception of a miracle, came a rustle among the leaves. Every head turned as one to see once more the mystic gleam of eyes in the gloom as the voice of Marufa cried—

"Let there be a new fire!"

From the cavern of the undergrowth emerged a white man carrying upon his bare shoulders a burden which, as he staggered into the gleam of the fires, was seen to be in form and in shape that of the lost idol. Then instantly did Bakahenzie leap to his feet and in one coup recover his lead and fetter his most dangerous enemy by proclaiming in a loud voice:

"Behold! The Bearer of the Burden of the World even as the son of Maliko hath prophesied!"

And as Birnier set down the idol, from warrior and wizard, with the chief witch-doctor's declaration "That which is and must be, shall be," echoing in their ears, came the deep grunt of acceptance of the new king-god of the lost Usakuma, the incarnation of the Unmentionable One.

TO BE CONCLUDED

The HOPELESS HAM

by RUSSELL A. BOGGS

Author of "The Cool Hand," "Leete Protests," etc.

COMFORTABLY propped against the weather-boarding, Sam Bellroy, aged one score and two, sat in the Friday afternoon sunshine outside the N. W. & S. railroad office at Sweet Creek and considered. In his ears the monotonous pattering of the telegraph instruments, drifting out through the open window above his head, droned lazily.

A long west-bound freight pulled in and stopped while he reclined there. The engineer dropped from his cab; the conductor came hurrying from the direction of the caboose; the two of them entered the office—on a matter of orders, or some like thing. They paid scant notice to the quiet figure squatted in the sunny corner at the front of the little building.

"If you're goin' west," remarked a casual voice, "here's your chance; climb on."

Sam lifted his eyes from a moody inspection of car wheels. Perched on top of the box car directly in front of him was a twinkling-eyed traveler, whose age must have been about thirty. The twinkling eyes, which regarded Sam steadily, were set in a happy-go-lucky face.

"I was thinking of going east," said Sam. He slowly stretched a leg.

"Seats free and a good view," urged the casual voice.

"Both'd just suit, all right enough," admitted Sam. "But there's a man in Cheyenne who'll give me a job."

Nevertheless, he stretched the other leg.

"I know a fellow who's out here building a

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town hall for Shale City," pursued the other. "He'll put us on; he wants men."

Parnell was the next station west of Sweet Creek, and beyond Parnell came Shale City, the latter place a good fifty miles from Sweet Creek.

"I need the money," confessed Sam.

"The crew'll not say a word," pressed the man on the train. "And if they should, I'll guarantee to square it. You'll be moving eventually; why not now? Come on."

"I believe I will," said Sam.

He rose and climbed on the box car.

The conductor and the engineer bustled out, each with a handful of flimsy sheets. The flagman was called. The operator in the office came strolling to the outer door.

There was a jolting and jostling of couplings as the train slowly started.

"Good-by, brother!" Sam called to the operator in the doorway. "If MacCorkle should inquire about me, tell'm I'm on his trail with blood in my eye!"

The operator raised a languid hand as a sign that he had heard. The car on which sat Sam and his companion rolled on. Directly it rounded a curve and operator and office were lost to view.

"So you've had trouble with Jesse?" observed Sam's fellow traveler.

"Jesse?" repeated Sam, a little at a loss.

"MacCorkle—Jesse MacCorkle, first-trick dispatcher on this division of the N. W. & S. Don't you know his front name?"

"I didn't. I might have guessed, though."

"Oh, all the boys know Jesse—though lots of 'em call him Mac. Known by all and loved by few. But I've heard it said, too, that, once you get to know him right, he's not so bad. Was it much?"

Sam Bellroy shook his head.

"No, not much. Night before last I went to Sweet Creek to handle first trick. The first day I worked—yesterday, that is—Jesse Mac and I hitched over a small matter of an OS. He called me a hopeless ham. I replied that epithets were a refuge for the weak and called him a barnacled bonehead. He said he'd see, and last night a man came to relieve me.

"Not much. But I resent his reflections on my professional ability."

The other was nodding in all sympathy.

"That's about MacCorkle's style," he said, "exactly. I've worked with him, but not lately, however—been off the railroad game. He doesn't seem to have changed any to speak of."

"Oh, well, what's the diff!" said Sam.

The pleasant rumble of the train, the warm, clean breeze, the satisfying view of distant mountains—all revived his spirits.

"The country's big," he observed.

Then without more ado he abruptly raised his voice in song:

> "For I've been working on the railroad,
> All the livelong day!
> Yes, I've been working on the railroad,
> Just to pass the time away!"

The song, rendered in not unpleasing tenor, stopped.

"My name's Bellroy," declared the singer, "Samuel J. If you care to reciprocate with the same kind of information it'll be perfectly all right. If not, likewise so."

"Judson," responded Sam's companion promptly. "Not important, but that's it."

They shook hands.

It was well on into the evening when they arrived at Shale City. And there disappointment awaited them—awaited Sam, at least. For, upon making inquiries, they found that Judson's friend was not putting up the new town hall; some other bidder had received the contract. The successful contractor was a stranger, and he didn't need men. Judson did not seem greatly concerned over the failure.

"Well, that's the way she goes," was his comment.

"I thought you said your friend was here, already working on the building," said Sam.

He did not wish to be disagreeable or too accusing, but he began to have doubts as to the other's accuracy of statement.

"Did I?" said Judson, with an air of careless innocence. "What I meant was that I knew he was bidding for the job. Naturally I supposed he got it."

There was not the slightest trace of embarrassment about him.

Sam did not quite follow Judson's reasoning. But he let it slide; that happy-go-lucky face convinced him further reproof would be useless.

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"I see," was Sam's only observation.

He was satisfied to have gained an insight into Judson's qualities.

A large part of Sam's sole remaining dollar purchased the two of them a bite of supper, Judson having stated that he was dead broke.

By the time they had finished eating it was quite dark—although the glow from the star-studded sky kept away absolute darkness. They strolled down to the N. W. & S. station and, on a tie pile on the opposite side of the track from the dimly lit depot, sat down. The long deep whistle of an approaching east-bound passenger-train reached them as they did so.

"I know a chief dispatcher out in Spokane," began Judson. "He'll give us a job. We'll wait for a west-bound freight and work out that way."

Sam was listening to the oncoming east-bound passenger.

"I'm going east," he said.

"This chief's all right," persisted Judson; "he's a good scout."

"I'm going east," repeated Sam.

To Cheyenne alone looked better to him than to Spokane with his uncertain companion.

With safety-valve popping, the passenger-train came roaring to a stop at Shale City depot, cutting short Judson's further insistence that Sam keep traveling west.

"Here's No. 18," said Sam, raising his voice just enough to catch the other's ear. "That's my train. Good-by!"

And before Judson could reply Sam had risen and was stealing along the cars toward the engine.

Being on the opposite side from the depot, he was able to gain his objective without being observed by trainmen or agent. His objective was the second car from the engine, this happening to be the express car; the one next to the engine was an empty baggage-coach.

Quickly and silently Sam swung himself up the ladder to the top of the express car. And, as No. 18 pulled ahead, he stretched himself out flat on the roof, face down. Up there he felt that in the darkness he would be fairly secure from discovery, and he knew there were no tunnels or low bridges anywhere close ahead.

"This way east!" chuckled Sam to himself as he snuggled down on top of the moving car. "Let 'er roll!"

II

FOR three days the two men who had issued bright and early each morning from an unpretentious hotel on lower Yesler Way, Seattle, and proceeded down to the water-front, where they hung around till dark, had found their watching in vain. Asking no questions, unobtrusively watching the bulletin boards on which the ship arrivals and departures were posted, they quietly mixed in with the other dock loiterers.

But the morning of the fourth day brought them their reward. Through the heavy fog that hung over the water a big liner came slowly nosing her way up the sound. Slowly she drifted out of the gray mist and warped in to the dock.

"The *Korean*," said Reeder, the man with the dark mustache, to Leach, his smooth-faced companion. "That's her!"

Leach nodded; a slight quickening of his breath might have been noticed.

"Yes," he said quietly.

They remained about the dock until half the afternoon had passed—after the passengers had come off and while the mail-bags and other lading were being unloaded. Certain heavy chests, stoutly secured and sealed, and sharply guarded, seemed to interest them strongly when brought off. But the two did not betray their interest. From a discreet distance they watched, with the idle eyes of the chance observer.

But an hour after this event the two strolled away and approached the office of a certain transcontinental express company. Only Reeder entered the office; the smooth-faced man waited outside.

Reeder did not stay long in the office. Within, he approached a desk and inquired what the charge would be for an eight-pound package to Chicago. While waiting for the information he caught the eye of a thin-faced clerk just across the aisle from the desk where the inquiry was made. The thin-faced clerk returned Reeder's glance for a second, then turned his head and bent over his desk; as he did so he raised his right hand to his right ear and with his forefinger stroked his ear-lobe, three times.

A moment later, the information regarding the rate having been given him, Reeder rejoined Leach on the sidewalk.

"Delf gave me the high sign," said

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Reeder in a low voice. "They've got it."

"Good enough!" said Leach.

They conversed for a few seconds, guardedly; then moved off in the direction of their hotel.

It was shortly after dark that night when they again established contact with the express clerk. This time all three met on a shadowy, quiet corner near the docks.

"East on No. 18 tonight," said the express clerk briefly.

"Just as we'd figured," said Reeder. "The entire shipment, doubtless, Delf?"

"The whole business," assured Delf. "I billed it out myself." He laughed carefully. "But even a small quarter of it would be enough, eh?"

Reeder and Leach laughed also.

"Enough and to spare!" agreed the former. "We'll never get away with all of it. But we'll get enough, won't we, Leach?"

"You said it!" exclaimed Leach. "Enough to do a lifetime, for each of us; that's my idea of it!"

"And a good idea!" approved Delf, the clerk. He hesitated a second. "I'll expect you fellows to get in touch with me—afterwards."

His words were half a question.

"Never fear, Delf," reassured Reeder quickly. "You'll get your share; don't worry. We've never double-crossed a pal yet, and we're not going to start now."

"I just wanted to be sure that everything was understood," said Delf apologetically.

"Sure!" responded Reeder. "That's all right. You've done your part. The rest is up to us. We'll let you know—and all that."

"All right," said Delf. He started to move away. "Good luck to you."

"Thanks," replied Reeder. "Good luck always has been our middle name!"

The clerk departed in one direction, Reeder and Leach going in another. And within the next hour the dark-mustached man and his companion had left the city. They had caught an east-bound limited which preceded No. 18 by some hours; it was a limited famous for its speed.

III

AS First-Trick Dispatcher MacCorkle stepped out of his office on Friday afternoon—just shortly after three o'clock, when his trick ended—he met Chief Dispatcher Kemroll.

"Hello," said the chief. "Just looking for you, Mac."

"What's up?" asked the first-trick dispatcher.

"Got an extra job for you today," replied Kemroll. "Take No. 18 east. What do you say?"

"Why, certainly," agreed MacCorkle. "But why me, if I may ask?"

"I'll tell you," replied Kemroll. "We haven't a train-master left to handle the job. Vasnough is up at that derailment on the branch; Pollrod's gone east with the G. M.'s Special; and Grossman is out of commission with boils on the neck. The old man has gone east with the G. M., too, and he's sort of left me in charge till he gets back. The only thing I see to do is send you out with No. 18. You can lay off tomorrow, then."

"I'll go, sure," said MacCorkle. "It'll be a change."

"Yes," affirmed the chief. He dropped his voice to a lower pitch. "If there was nothing special on we might leave her go without anybody but the crew. But there is something special. I've just got word that No. 18 is carrying a shipment of gold—about two million dollars worth."

MacCorkle whistled.

"Two millions! Man, you make me dizzy!"

"Isn't it the truth! The stuff got in yesterday from China—on the *Korean.* I understand it's the initial payment on some railroad equipment some Chinks have bought. Might be from the Chinese Government itself—I don't know. The only thing that concerns us is that the stuff's on No. 18—and that's enough, if you ask me."

"It's sure a plenty," assented MacCorkle. "And you mean you're going to put me in charge of that much wealth—going to use me for a watch-dog over it?"

The chief chuckled.

"That's the idea, MacCorkle. There's none so certain to keep an eye on the gold pile as your bonny Scot, eh?"

The smallest semblance of a twinkle came into MacCorkle's cold, hard eyes.

"There's truth in that, Kemroll, I'll admit."

"Get yourself a bite to eat, Mac," pursued Kemroll, "and be ready to climb on when No. 18 gets here. And for heaven's sake keep her out of trouble and

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see that she gets over the division safe. I'll see that the line's kept clear for her—you see that no one touches the gold. If any one should put one over on you and mishandle the stuff, it'll be good-night-nurse for you. But I guess there's not much danger of that; the thing's been kept pretty secret."

"Trust a Scotchman!" proclaimed MacCorkle. "The gold will go through safe with me."

He hurried out to a restaurant and had a bite to eat. He then phoned his wife not to look for him until the next day. Although a bit puffed up over the trust that had been reposed in him, he decided it would be best not to mention the cause of his absence until his return. Then, with No. 18 safely delivered to the next division, his pleasure in telling her would be all the greater; he could speak of it with a load off his mind.

Rumor had it that Kemroll would not be in the chief dispatcher's chair much longer—that he was slated for something higher up. MacCorkle comfortably reflected that his present opportunity to show what he could do was in the nature of a test—that he was being considered for Kemroll's present place. Every little bit helped.

It was a little after five o'clock when No. 18 pulled into the depot, a long heavy train of all-steel coaches and big locomotive. A late connection from the branch held her up for half an hour, consequently it was nearly six o'clock when she pulled out.

The chief dispatcher came down to the train-shed to see MacCorkle off.

"Go it, Mac!" called out Kemroll as the train started and MacCorkle climbed to the cab of the engine. "Don't pull any bonehead stuff!"

MacCorkle leaned out from the fireman's seat.

"You watch me!" he shouted. "I'll come out on top!"

He leaned on the cushioned ledge of the fireman's window as the train rolled out of the train-shed, through the yards and out on to the main line beyond the yard limits. Bonehead! Where had he heard that same word, just lately? Oh, yes—and he smiled to himself—that was what that gay operator at Sweet Creek had called him, yesterday. Well, he'd fixed that operator's clock, anyway.

MacCorkle's smile broadened—at recollection of the operator's discomfiture and with confidence in his own waxing prestige. He settled himself down for the five-hour vigil that would ensue before No. 18 reached the terminal where the connecting division began and where his responsibility would cease.

IV

NO. 18 did not tarry any along the road after she left Shale City. She made good time, hitting the ball at a steady sixty-mile clip where she had a half-chance. However, despite the speed, for the first half-hour the going was not unpleasant for Sam Bellroy, stretched out on top of the express car, his head to the engine. The air was warm, and, as it swept over him, he rested his head in the crook of his arm, his felt hat well pulled down on his head. Thus he offered no great resistance to the air's rush and had suffered no discomfort.

But by the time the train reached Parnell—where No. 18 stopped to get the engine a drink—the night air had grown pretty cool. Sam decided that perhaps it would be best to descend from his lofty perch to a place where he'd have more protection.

Cautiously he raised his head and carefully peered over the side of the coach to see what the chances were for his slipping unseen down to the blind-baggage. But while he peered down into the semi-gloom along the coaches he perceived two men come gliding along the cars, and from the passenger-trainmen's caps which they wore he supposed they were members of the crew. There was enough dim light from the car windows to enable him to see them slip in between the cars: one between the car he was on and the car immediately in the rear, the other between his car and the car ahead. Thus his retreat either way was cut off.

"Discovered, by George!" concluded Sam.

He expected every second to see their heads rise above the level of the car top and to hear their impatient voices order him off.

In the meantime he flattened himself out, hoping against hope to make himself invisible to them.

A moment passed, and still he heard no rough voices addressed in his direction. He heard a clattering up at the water-tank

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as the spout was raised, this denoting that the tender had been filled. Short, quick blasts of the whistle called the flagman, and in a little time the train was once more on its way.

"What the deuce!" Sam breathed softly. "Must have been mistaken; guess they hadn't seen me after all."

Slyly he raised his head and glanced round; no trainman was in sight.

"That's luck—but a narrow squeak!" he congratulated himself.

He supposed, naturally, that the trainmen had gone back and boarded the coaches in the rear while he was endeavoring to make himself invisible to them. But he couldn't be sure.

"Guess I'll just stick up here a bit longer," he decided.

Between Parnell and Sweet Creek, the next office east, the country was pretty rough and the going for No. 18 was a bit harder. The running time for the train between the two places Sam knew to be forty minutes; he composed himself to wait patiently that long at least.

The big locomotive strained at the heavy coaches, finding it hard going up the grade that lay just ahead. In ten minutes the top of the grade was reached, however, And then, just as the engine was stretching out for a spin on the level, there was a sudden sharp hissing between the second and third coaches—that is, between the car whereon Sam rode and the car just behind it—the air-brakes snapped on and the train jarred to an abrupt halt.

Somewhat startled for an instant, Sam once more raised his head,and peered over the side of the coach.

"Busted air-hose, by jing!" he ejaculated.

Down where the hissing had come from he could hear some one jerking levers and working at the coupling gear. Also, he beheld a man in a trainman's cap scramble out from between his car and the car ahead and go running toward the engine—doubtless the same man who had climbed in there at Parnell. Strange, reasoned Sam swiftly, what he had been doing in there since; also strange about the other man—the one who had climbed in behind him and who doubtless was the man now working at the couplings. The fact that neither of the trainmen carried a lantern also suddenly struck Sam as being singular.

The train had just emerged from a cut when the air-brakes flew on. There being no embankments on either side, the faint starlight, added to what dim light came from the head car windows, made the action on the ground fairly distinct to Sam.

"What's the matter?" A voice from the engine called down to the approaching man in the trainman's cap. Sam didn't know it then; but the owner of the voice was First-Trick Dispatcher MacCorkle. "Air-hose busted?"

"Yep!" hoarsely answered the runner in the panting, unrecognizable voice of one who has hurried and become winded. "Gimme a wrench!"

A few choice expletives came from MacCorkle.

"Hang it all!" he exploded, evidently wrathful at the delay. "Get him a wrench, quick!"

This last apparently was directed at some one else in the cab.

The runner had reached the cab steps. But, without waiting for the wrench to be handed down, he climbed up into the cab. And when the engineer had finally fished a monkey-wrench from the tool-box and turned around to offer it, the bright dazzling light from an electric pocket-lamp was flashed in the faces of himself, the fireman and MacCorkle; the wicked muzzle of an automatic pistol was pointed at them; and they were addressed by a voice that now was not panting as if from exertion—a voice that was strange to them all and which now came from behind a black mask.

"Raise your hands—do as I tell you—and do it quick!" ordered the voice of the pseudo-trainman, sometimes known as King Leach. "If you don't think I'm boss, refuse!"

The action in the cab, of course, was unseen by Sam Bellroy. But, as No. 18's locomotive had used up all her surplus steam in making the grade, her safety-valve was silent, and, there being no other escaping steam to drown out the voices, the words had carried clearly enough to Sam. There seemed to be no doubt that all in the cab acknowledged the man who spoke last as boss; there was no disturbance.

MEANTIME, the conductor and a brakeman, who had been riding in the rear coaches, had popped out, lanterns in their hands. They started to hurry toward the head end of the train,

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being joined on the way by the baggage-master. But the express messenger within the coach on which Sam was located never peeped out, he keeping his doors locked securely; he was playing it safe.

The man who had been busy between the second and third cars stepped out as the three trainmen came running forward.

"Keep back there!" shouted this man, sometimes known as "Ready" Reeder. "Keep away from here! Go and crawl back in your coaches!"

And to emphasize the commands three shots were fired over the trainmen's heads, the bullets singing back along the cars.

The trainmen paused. Obviously those whistling bullets were impressive.

"Go on back, I say!" repeated the man who had fired the shots.

He sent another bullet singing along the train, this last one a little closer to the three men's heads.

The trainmen paused no longer; they beat a hasty retreat in the directions from which they had come.

"Well, I do say!" Sam Bellroy exclaimed gently to himself. "If we're not having a regular hold-up! Both phony-trainmen—wearing those caps to fool anybody who might glimpse 'em! Well, they sure fooled me as bad as they did that guy on the engine!"

Another startling thing—startling to Sam, anyway—now took place. The man who had done the shooting—Reeder—now turned toward the engine.

"All right here!" he shouted. "Take her ahead!"

And, before Bellroy realized what was taking place, the second and third cars were separating, the engine pulling away with the first and second coaches, leaving the third coach and all the cars behind it standing stationary on the track. And there, of course, was the astonished Sam on top of the moving second coach, or express car.

For a moment he was possessed with a prompting to jump from the top to the ground. But the height and the momentum of the moving cars made such a course foolhardy. Feeling certain that the shooter was hanging to the step of the express car, Sam then thought of running forward, climbing down the ladder at the opposite end and dropping off.

But the engine had picked up speed quickly, and, by the time he could have climbed down the speed would have made alighting there as dangerous as jumping from the roof—especially in the uncertain darkness. Also, way back in his head lurked a wilful desire to see the affair through; things like this didn't happen every day.

"Seeing there doesn't seem anything better to do, we'll just stick for soup!" decided Sam. And then, after a little reflection, added, "Must be something in this express car these two boys want awful bad. Let's hope they don't try to blow 'er open—'specially while I'm up here!"

As near as Sam could judge, the engine and two coaches proceeded about two miles before the brakes suddenly were applied and they came to a quick stop.

There was no delay. MacCorkle, the engineer and the fireman, followed by Leach, quickly descended from the cab, the first three driven by the last man's threatening pistol, the light from his electric-lamp shining on them.

"Some official," concluded the watchful Sam after his first surprize at seeing MacCorkle—Bellroy having had no personal acquaintance with the first-trick dispatcher.

At the same time the four men came from the cab the second hold-up man also appeared, he this time having, like his partner, an electric-torch in his one hand. But, whereas Leach and the three other men from the engine came down and stopped opposite the express car on the engineer's side of the train, to Sam's right, Reeder came along the opposite, or fireman's side, to Sam's left; he now was masked, too, as a chance ray from his torch revealed.

Reeder at once approached the express-car door, the door being right below the place where Sam was lying. The hold-up man tapped loudly on the steel door with some hard object, evidently the butt of his pistol.

"Open up!" he commanded the express messenger within. "Open up, and you'll not get hurt! Stay in there and refuse, and you will!"

No answer or sound came from within the car. Neither did the door open. Reeder swore energetically for a moment.

"He's a close-mouthed one!" he exclaimed, seemingly for the benefit of Leach on the opposite side of the car. Again he tapped on the door.

"Open up, you fool! Open 'er up or we'll

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blow your dashed car into small-sized bits!"

This demand, however, brought no better results than the first one. Within the car all was quiet.

"You won't, won't you!" cried the impatient Reeder, after waiting a few seconds. "All right—we'll show you!"

Sam Bellroy, peeping a cautious eye over the edge of the roof, now saw the man below move quickly over to the edge of the right-of-way, flash his light for a moment among some scrubby bushes growing there and then, after a little search, stoop over and fumble at something. In a few minutes he moved back toward the train, his light flashing for an instant on several brown, cylindrical objects in his hand.

"Dynamite, by thunder!" breathed the attentive Sam. "Been planted there. My stars, this's been well planned out!"

For a little time the man with the dynamite fumbled around the car door directly below Sam. Then finally the bandit straightened up. Once more he tapped the door—but more carefully this time.

"Will you open the door, or shall I light this fuse?" he called out. "Last call—and move quick!"

Still no answer from the stubborn messenger. Reeder moved back about a foot from the door.

"All right. Here she goes!" he cried. "Move back over there!" he shouted to Leach. "I'm going to light 'er!"

He thrust his fingers in his vest pocket, evidently for a match.

Sam Bellroy, atop the threatened coach, had been doing some swift and fancy thinking. Here was a bad deed going to be done. Probably the spunky express messenger in the car would get hurt—let alone Sam himself. The three men whom the bandit on the other side covered with his pistol were powerless to interfere. The only person present who possibly might mix up the hold-up men's arrangements seemed to be himself, Sam reflected. The bandit standing right below Sam, his head about ten feet lower than the car roof, was tempting. Why not?

In cat-like silence Sam Bellroy balanced himself on the balls of his feet. He placed his hands at the edge of the roof, gave a little spring—and dropped down along the side of the express car door.

When a man is hit by a solid object weighing one hundred and eighty pounds, the object being exceedingly compact and dropping from a height ten feet above the man's head, it's no joke. If the man who was just going to light the fuse never knew this before, he was aware of it from the time Sam Bellroy landed on him. That is, he was aware of it from the time he woke up.

There was nothing to it. Reeder simply went to the ground in one surprized lump, one stupendous grunt being all that came from him. After he hit the ground he just lay there, limp and quiet. Probably the fact that one of Sam's heels had found a refuge right below the bandit's diaphragm helped to account for this. The pistol and light—which he had been holding in his left hand—flew from Reeder's grasp. By some miracle the light, which landed ten feet away, did not break or go out.

The shock threw Sam himself off his balance for a second. But Reeder's midriff proved a good cushion and Sam instantly righted himself. Feeling around on the ground swiftly, his fingers found the pistol the man had dropped. Bellroy clasped this quickly, rejoicing that he had found it with so little delay. At once he slipped silently toward the rear of the express car.

IN THE meanwhile there had been some slight confusion on the opposite side of the car, where Leach kept guard over his three victims. The sounds of the scuffling had reached the four men, apparently to the guard's alarm.

"What's the matter?" the guard called out. "What's the trouble over there? What's up?"

Seemingly he was in a predicament: afraid to leave his charges, and yet being desirous of coming over to see what was going on. Probably he was a little dubious about pursuing the latter course, too—not knowing what he might be running into.

"What's the trouble, buddy?" repeated Leach.

His alarm seemed to increase as he received no answer from his companion.

"Everything's perfectly all right!" assured a quiet voice from the dark rear corner of the express car, not much over thirty feet from where Leach was standing with his flashlight still turned on his three helpless victims. "Just you toss your gun on the ground, turn your light on the weapon so I can see it, and then you'll find out for yourself.

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"Do as I say, now," pursued the voice. "Your buddy's out of the battle, I've got his gun, and it's liable to go off if there's any delay. It'll not do you a bit of good to turn off your light; I can see you anyhow."

There was a slight hesitation on the bandit's part. He seemed too much amazed to be able to act immediately.

"Who in the devil!" he sort of gasped. "Where——"

"Never mind!" broke in Sam, his words growing sharper. "You drop that gun!"

There was no more delay. A little thump proclaimed that Leach had done as ordered. Then the circle of light from the lamp was turned on the pistol, revealing it on the ground some seven or eight feet from where the bandit was standing.

"That's right," said Sam. "Now then, Mr. Engineer, has he got any other weapon in his hands?"

"No, sir," replied the engineer promptly.

"That's good too," continued Sam. "Then you pick up that gun, take the light and turn it on our friend. Keep it turned full on him; we want to see him good."

A big arm reached down and picked up the pistol; the light changed hands; the rays were turned on Leach's masked face.

"Now, you bandit man," ordered Sam, "march around the car here—over to where your pal is snoozing. Come on, boys, you too. Mind that light, Eagle-eye."

The procession started, moved around the car as instructed, and under Sam's direction came to where Reeder was lying.

Stooping, Bellroy picked up Reeder's still glowing torch. He swept the light over the group.

"Well," he said, "everything seems to be coming out all right. Here're two good bandits, all ready for the calaboose. The express car and the rest of this abbreviated train are still here, unharmed and nothing taken. Here're the engineer and the fireman to take us back to where we want to go."

His light rested on MacCorkle's face.

"Everything and everybody seems accounted for but you and I. Who are you?"

"My eye!" exclaimed the first-trick dispatcher, still slightly bewildered by the rush of recent sudden events. "But you're a canny one!" He drew a deep breath of thankful relief. "My name's MacCorkle; I'm the first-trick dispatcher."

"MacCorkle!" ejaculated Sam. It was his turn to be surprized. "Well, I'll be stewed!"

Unseen by the dispatcher, Bellroy's eyes narrowed in a squinting, half-humorous way.

"Little old MacCorkle! And I suppose you're guardian-angeling this train over the division. Must be something worth while on board!"

"I'll not say you're a poor guesser," replied MacCorkle. "I'm sure in your debt. But we'll discuss all that later. Meantime, who are you, and how did you happen in on this?"

"I've been dead-heading on top of that express car, clear from Shale City," explained Sam calmly. "When this lad who's been knocked out tried to blow open the door I just dropped down on him from the roof. I seem to've lit mostly on his stomach; I guess that's what put him out so quick. Then I picked up his gun, slipped around the car—and the rest of it you know.

"But my monicker, that's different. I'm the hopeless ham from Sweet Creek; my name is Bellroy—Samuel J."

"Operator Bellroy! The hopeless ham!" The words came from MacCorkle in a feeble splutter.

"The same," assured Sam evenly.

MacCorkle stood blinking in the light for a moment. Then realization of what he owed to Sam must have given him strength. He pulled himself together.

"Bellroy," he said humbly, "Bellroy, you had it right and I had it wrong. I am a barnacled bonehead! And there's my hand on it. Will you shake?"

"Sure, I'll shake!" grinned Sam.

He extended his own hand. MacCorkle's usually cold eyes twinkled with pleasure in the shaft of light from the electric-torch; his hard face relaxed.

"And now if you'll only come back to that job at Sweet Creek," said the first-trick dispatcher, "I can fix it up—and will, if you'll come."

Sam Bellroy considered for a moment. His comeback at MacCorkle had been all that he could have desired—and more. He was filled with a large, benevolent sense of having done a good work. He recalled Judson's words that once you got to know the first-trick dispatcher he was not so bad. Cheyenne was yet a long way east; a job at hand was worth several afar off.

"I'll tell you," replied Sam after the moment's delay, slowly, "I'll tell you, Jesse Mac; I'll just go you."

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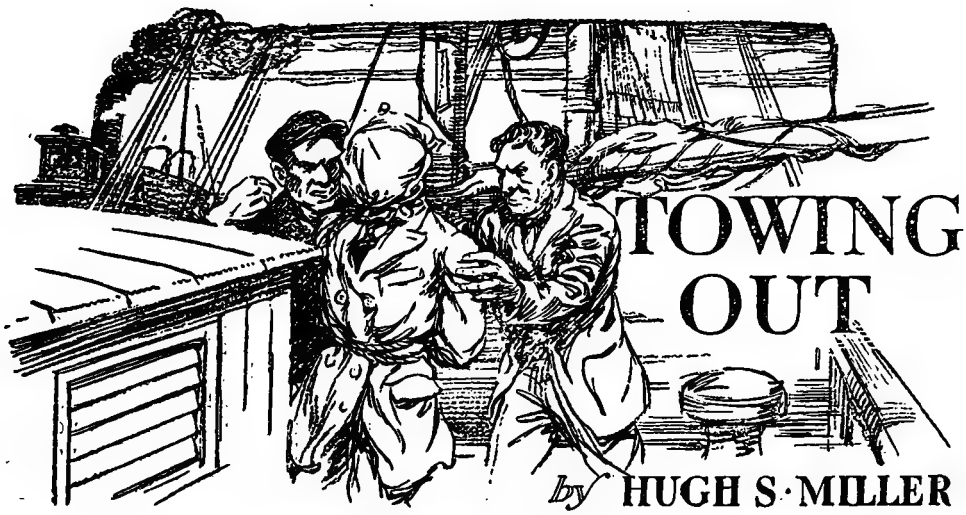

TOWING OUT

by HUGH S. MILLER

Author of "Mr. Hobbs," "Will of the Wasp," etc.

IN THE pilot-house of the tug-boat *Jupiter*, lying at the end of her dock waiting for a call, Captain Tupper reclined on the locker, reading the morning paper. Mr. Crump, the mate, sat on a stool, methodically cleaning his pipe. It was Sunday morning, and Sunday is quiet in the harbor, just as it is anywhere else. The *Neptune*, the other boat on duty, had gone to the gas works with a barge of coal, and the *Jupiter* was alone.

From the open window at the mate's elbow the world looked to consist of ships and wharves and warehouses, and to be circumscribed by a lofty, irregular fence of masts and wireless aerials. Across the harbor a ferry-boat was edging into shore, the thin smoke from its funnel bending slightly astern. And out toward the gateway to the sea was the dim shape of an outgoing freighter. Otherwise, everything was still.

"Looks like a dull day," said the mate. "Hanged if it ain't a dull life, towboatin', when you come to think of it. Nothing to do but poke things in and out of docks. I'm near fed up on it, myself. Why, we haven't been outside the harbor—not even up to Lynn or Beverly—for a month."

Captain Tupper gave no sign of having heard. At the moment he was pursuing the fragments of an article he had been reading, which had broken off with "Continued on Page 3, Second Section," and trying commendably to keep from showing his annoyance. Besides, he had heard similar observations from Mr. Crump before. Whenever the *Jupiter* drew the Sunday trick, in fact. It was an open secret that the mate had other ideas about spending Sunday.

"I gave up the sea because I thought I'd have more time to myself towboatin' and I'd get to mix more with people," the mate went on. "But holy smoke! I might just as well be back on the old *Erasmus*, bangin' up and down the West Coast. I had just as much time to myself, and everybody was a lot more sociable," he added, calmly.

Captain Tupper finished reading the article and let the newspaper slip to the floor.

"It's quiet down here, but it seems to be lively enough up-town," he said.

"Oh, yes. It's lively enough up-town if you know where to go," said the mate, briskly. "I know a place——"

"I see by the paper there's been another diamond robbery," continued the captain. "Mrs. Somebody-or-other, the wife of one of the trusts. A half a million dollars' worth of stones, the paper says."

"That's more than I thought she had," said the mate.

"It's the third of the kind. The paper says they must have got altogether more than a million dollars."

"I'll bet the police are hoppin' some," said the mate.

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"They say there's a woman in it. That ought to interest you. The captain said it rather dryly.

"It would," returned the mate promptly, "if I knew the woman."

Captain Tupper put his hands behind his head and yawned.

"It's a funny way to make a living—stealing diamonds. It wouldn't appeal to me at all. But towboatin' wouldn't appeal to a diamond-thief. We're all of us crazy, I guess."

"Sure," said Mr. Crump, cheerfully, "we're all bugs."

"You," remarked the captain, "are a bug on the subject of girls, and I——"

"Oh, I don't know," said the mate, reaching a plug of tobacco from the shelf in front of the wheel and proceeding expertly to slice a pipe-full. "I don't mind sayin' I can't pass a pretty face without lookin' at it, but I'm no *Don June*. I hope I'll never see the day when I won't be amenable to beauty. It's natural with a young fellow like me. And what are you a bug about?" he inquired.

"Beans," said the captain, "string-beans. Nice, crisp, juicy, tender string-beans."

The mate tossed the tobacco to the shelf.

"Stringy string-beans."

"That's all right. I'm the champion string-bean grower in Medford."

The mate rose leisurely and, having lighted his pipe, leaned out of the window, with his arms on the ledge, and smoked a moment in silence. Then he said, over his shoulder:

"That's what I call a life of adventure. String-beans!"

"When you get as old as I am you'll think more of a dish of string-beans and less of a pretty face," observed the captain, prosaically. "That's the way it goes."

Mr. Crump did not reply at once and, as a consequence, lost the opportunity to refute this disturbing argument. For a voice from outside called—

"Captain Tupper!"

The captain got up and stepped out of the pilot-house. He made a very dignified appearance, standing with his hand on the knob of the door, the bright sun on his gray hair, and his head slightly bent to catch the words of McCloud, the assistant superintendent, who stood on an iron platform that projected from the office above.

"Schooner *Exeter* going out to sea," McCloud called down. "Captain's here to go aboard."

Captain Tupper nodded and, reentering the pilot-house, put on his cap. Tony, the deck-hand, took the ladder which lay along the rail of the upper deck and set it up from the main deck to the wharf.

The mate, whose head had been out the window on the harbor side while this was going on, drew it in. He was in time to see the head and shoulders of the captain of the *Exeter*, followed by the remainder of his person, appear on deck by way of the short iron ladder from below.

The newcomer was a foreign-looking man with a thin, sharp face, and eyes which, for a sea-captain, had an unusual quickness of movement. He glanced around, seeming to take in everything on deck—so that the mate had a good view of his features—and then turned back to the rail as if waiting for some one.

"He's a sour-lookin' party," Mr. Crump confided to Captain Tupper. "I wouldn't want to ship under that guy. I wouldn't trust him as far as I could swing a bull by the tail. Oh, my!"

This last was occasioned by the appearance at the head of the ladder of a young woman who was exceedingly fair to behold. In all particulars her face was unlike that of her companion. It was neither thin nor sharp, and her eyes, instead of being active and "jumpy"—as the mate had characterized in his mind those of the schooner's captain—were singularly steady and placid. Wonderful eyes, they were, Mr. Crump decided, as soon as he had contrived to look into them.

"They might mean anything," he said to himself, "and then again they might mean nothing. Oh, why do they make 'em so pretty and pink!" This, however, did not have reference to her eyes.

THE lines having been cast off, Captain Tupper gave the wheel a turn and rang the bell, and the *Jupiter*, with a shake of herself as if waking from a nap, moved ahead. Then he invited his passengers into the pilot-house. They accepted silently, and the man, after a glance that took in everything from the certificate of inspection to the pencil stuck in the chimney of the lamp over the shelf which did duty as a desk, sat on the locker.

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The girl, however, moved up and sat on the stool by the window. Thereupon Mr. Crump, without being reminded, relieved Captain Tupper at the wheel and thus established himself with the girl comfortably at his elbow. Captain Tupper sat beside the man on the locker.

"My daughter," said the schooner captain to Captain Tupper, with a jerk of his thumb toward the girl.

"Glad to meet you," said the mate promptly and pleasantly. "Nice day, ain't it?"

The girl turned her head and regarded him briefly with the impersonal stare that distinguishes young ladies who know what to do when they are spoken to from those who do not—contemplated his boyish countenance, good-humored now and wearing the expression of smiling audacity which distinguishes young men who sometimes speak to young ladies from those who never do.

And in that short moment, with the celerity that is said to be indigenous to the feminine mind, she apparently came to the conclusion that as she was going to be for some time on a ship where the crop of men would be small and mostly windfalls, and as this one was within easy reach and waiting to be picked, and as she had a few minutes to spare, she—oh, well! Her eyes widened, fluttered slightly and fell, and she affirmed that it was a nice day.

Thus encouraged, Mr. Crump exerted his conversational faculties to the utmost. Not that he talked too much—he was too wise for that. He had heard that the art of conversation consists in being a good listener, and he kept this in mind. Still it was necessary for him to say something.

The girl, in fact, left it all to him. She talked with her eyes, her smile, the shake of her head, the shape of her ear, the color of her hair, her hands, her wrists—but not her voice. It was as if she felt that, with two souls so well attuned as theirs, no audible expression was needed; that she had but to frame in her mind whatever she wished to communicate, and he would understand. And he did—or believed he did.

Most of the time she sat quietly gazing ahead at the still water, spangled with silver drops of sunlight, which the *Jupiter*, with a bedraggled rope bumper on her nose, was cleaving in a businesslike way, an expression of contentment on her face, as though merely being afloat made her happy. Mr. Crump noted it with a pleasurable thrill.

Once in a while she would turn and survey the harbor with an embracing glance that included its visible extent, and which, at the end of its inspection, passed across the eyes of the schooner captain, seated on the locker with Captain Tupper. Then she would look up at Mr. Crump and smile as if to beg his pardon for the momentary diversion of her attention, the effect of which would be to accelerate his pulse and his tongue.

In the short period that it took them to run from the wharf to the schooner, the mate managed to impart to her that he was twenty-six, that the island on the right had been bought from the Indians for a couple of pieces of tobacco and a red handkerchief, that he was not married, that he had no regular girl, that the House of Correction was on the one at the left, that he had been eighteen months at sea on the steamer *Erasmus*, that there was a reduction plant on the one ahead, that she had beautiful eyes, that what she smelled was the spice cake the cook below was baking for dinner—and, besides, the wind was aft, that he had a pilot's license and expected any time to have a boat of his own, that it was a good town to live in, that the small boat crossing their bows was an "Eyetalian" fisherman, that the captain of a tug made good money—and various other relevant and irrelevant details.

She heard him with interested serenity, lowering her eyes when he mentioned them, raising them when he spoke of the spice cake.

Coming alongside the schooner, the two captains got up from the locker and stepped outside, leaving Mr. Crump alone with her. He looked at her, and it seemed to him that there was a tantalizing smile in her eyes that had not been there before, as if she was wondering what he was going to do about it. It went to his head, and he let the *Jupiter* shoulder the schooner with a bump that shook every loose thing aboard the tug. The stool on which the girl was seated tilted forward, depositing her neatly in Mr. Crump's arms to his immense satisfaction. He obeyed the impulse and kissed her.

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It surprized her—there was no doubt of it; but it did not provoke a scene, as Mr. Crump, with a sinking feeling, for an instant thought it might. True, she uttered an exclamation. What it sounded like was something he knew she would not have said so he decided he had not heard her correctly—although at first it gave him a shock. She recovered herself at once, and the eyes that she turned on him were as calm and impassive as ever. He wondered if he might—but just then the schooner captain appeared in the door and beckoned with a nod.

Mr. Crump stepped to the side with her. He asked her to be sure to write him. She gave him another smiling look, in which he fancied he detected tenderness, and her hand, which he pressed boldly. Then she went aboard the schooner.

The donkeyman on the *Exeter* had steam up, and the anchors were raised quickly. Tony, the deck-hand, assisted by the fireman, got out a five-inch manila hawser, and passed the end up to the schooner. As the tug moved ahead, Mr. Crump, who had been looking along the rail of the schooner, saw a face crowned with light brown hair glance over the side. A white hand waved, and then the vision disappeared.

Captain Tupper caught another signal and rang to the engine-room. The hawser rose out of the water and, as it felt the pull, vibrated like the string of a musical instrument, shaking the water out in showers. Astern of the tug was a whirling vortex. The schooner bowed slightly and began to move, long low ripples curling away from her stem.

"You seemed to be getting on very well with the girl," said Captain Tupper.

"Mr. Crump's face lighted up.

"Wasn't she a wonder?"

"Didn't talk much, did she?"

"That's it," said the mate, eagerly. "That's the difference. Most girls talk you pale in the face. But this one—she's a lady. No slang—no chatter—no nothing. Quiet—modest—old-fashioned. That's the word—old-fashioned. They don't come like that nowadays."

Captain Tupper stopped and glanced aft to see how the vessel was coming.

"Better look out, or you'll be saving your money."

The mate grinned.

"Well, how would you like something like that around the house yourself?"

Captain Tupper, a married man with grandchildren, did not feel called upon to answer. He surrendered the wheel and, returning to the locker, sat watching the schooner.

"They're making sail already," he said. "They're not losing any time."

"They need to get all of this breeze they can. It don't look to me as if it was going to hold." Mr. Crump whistled a snatch of a tune. "What was it the poet said: 'Her voice was soft and slow—an excellent thing in woman.' "

" 'Low'—not 'slow'."

" 'Low', then."

FOR a while they moved on in silence. Captain Tupper bestowed himself at full length on the locker, his head on an old blue sofa pillow, and dozed, lulled by the rhythmic rattle of the windows. The mate supported himself with his arms on the wheel and gave himself over to retrospective meditation. At times he looked back at the schooner which, with its lower sails set and glistening white in the sun, followed the tug like a dignified bird, with its plumage extended, pursuing an insect along the ground.

Once or twice it slewed off so he could see the length of the deck, and then, after a glance at Captain Tupper to make sure he was asleep, he took the glasses and tried for another glimpse of the girl. He was rewarded by the sight of her for a moment. She was talking with a man he recognized as the mate—actually talking rapidly. She made a gesture toward the sails, and another astern; then went below.

In the course of time it became necessary for Mr. Crump to blow the whistle to remind an outside tug coming in with a string of barges that he was entitled to a portion of the channel, and this woke Captain Tupper. He took a walk around the boat bareheaded and, returning, paused by the door and gazed off to port. The mate looked and saw a small craft moored near the shore.

"They tell me," Captain Tupper said, reentering the pilot-house, "that that fellow over there is experimenting with a new kind of submarine telegraph. He's got it now so he can hear everything, but he can't tell just where it's coming from. I expect

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he's listening now to the thump of our screw. Funny sort of life—stuck out there all by yourself listening to the ships go by."

"Sure," said Mr. Crump, giving the wheel a turn and slipping a becket over one of the spokes. "He's a bug too," he added genially.

"They're working out some pretty clever things nowadays to make sea-travel safe," observed the captain. "They didn't have any of them when I was at sea. All we had to signal with was a bunch of dirty flags. You couldn't have told what colors they were if you had laid them on the deck and walked around them."

"You didn't have the Morse light in those days," said Mr. Crump.

"We did not," said Captain Tupper.

"I was the curly-haired boy with the Morse light on the *Erasmus*," said Mr. Crump, with another look behind at the schooner. "One night we were lying off the bar of one of those African rivers with a German boat a half a mile outside us, and I kidded him with the light. Ticked him off the whole Declaration of Independence, in pieces. He didn't like it. Said I a foolish sense of humor had." Mr. Crump jerked his thumb in direction of the sea. "We're gone about far enough, haven't we?"

"Give him a few more kicks," said Captain Tupper. "He hasn't got much of a wind."

"Where's he going?"

"He didn't say."

"She didn't either," said the mate.

A little later Captain Tupper reached for the whistle.

"Guess we'll stand by and let her go."

He rang to the engine-room and the tug slowed up, moving to one side out of the schooner's way. They stood looking up at the vessel's forecastle, watching for the crew to drop the hawser. But the forecastle seemed to be deserted. Mr. Crump allowed his gaze to wander aft. The only person he saw was the man at the wheel, a stolid foreigner, staring ahead like a figure carved in wood. The girl was nowhere in sight.

"What's the matter with them?" said Captain Tupper, and again he blew the whistle.

The helmsman gave them a sidelong glance; then resumed his study of the prospect in front of him. Captain Tupper, with an exclamation of annoyance, seized his megaphone and directed it at him.

"Hey!" he shouted. "Let go that hawser!"

And with his right hand he waved toward the bow of the schooner. But the helmsman, if he heard, made no response.

"He don't understand," said the mate. "Besides, he's deaf, dumb and blind." He experienced a thought. "Run her alongside, and I'll go up."

Captain Tupper, with a muttered soliloquy on the mental capacity of deep-water navigators, put the bow of the tug against the side of the schooner and held it steady long enough for Mr. Crump, with the help of Tony, to raise the ladder and ascend to the deck. Tony tossed him a line. Captain Tupper, leaning out of the window, caught the wave of his hand that signified he had made it fast, and saw him disappear from the rail.

"All right, Tony," said Captain Tupper; "take it in."

Tony went forward and hauled in the slack and waited for the end of the hawser to come down.

Minutes passed, but it did not come. Tony remained standing with his feet wide apart, the hawser in his hands. Once he glanced up at the head and shoulders of Captain Tupper, framed in the open window of the pilot-house. The captain's eyes were roving impatiently along the rail above. There was no movement, and no sound of any kind came from the schooner.

Captain Tupper blew a series of short, peremptory blasts on the whistle to hurry the mate, but nothing happened. Mr. Crump made no answer; there was no sign of activity; and the towing-hawser was as firmly secured as ever.

The captain raised his hand to the whistle-rope again, intending to sound another blare. But he changed his mind. He jerked his head in the window angrily, strode out of the pilot-house, and stepped on the ladder. Tony ran back to hold it steady.

"What d'you suppose—" he began, but decided, on second thought, to withhold the question.

Captain Tupper in grim silence mounted the ladder.

Tony watched him until he vanished over the schooner's side. Then went forward

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once more, and taking up the hawser, stared at the rail above, waiting for the signal to haul it in.

He waited until his neck was tired. The schooner, gliding slowly through the water, was completely quiet. By and by Tony gave it up and, thoughtfully rubbing the back of his neck, walked aft to chat with the engineer.

He found him sitting in the engine-room, reading, with a pair of silver-rimmed glasses, a fragment of newspaper containing advertisements of pianos for sale. Tony stopped in the doorway and asked him if he could imagine what was keeping the two men.

"I could," said the engineer; "I could imagine they had been struck by lightning. But," he went one, rubbing his glasses with an oily handkerchief, "I should think it was more likely the *Señor el Capitan* of the schooner had opened a bottle of furniture-polish. They'll be comin' aboard singin' 'Annie Laurie' and 'Alice Ben Bolt.' "

"Not him," said Tony, referring to Captain Tupper; "he was——"

He heard a sound behind him and turned; then with a peculiar expression on his face he moved sideways into the engine-room. The engineer, looking past him, stopped rubbing his glasses and stood up. In the doorway stood a stranger. He was a small, ugly man, and he had in his hand a revolver which he pointed at them, moving it alternately from one to the other with a regular, almost playful motion.

THE reason Mr. Crump did not go forward immediately and cast off the tow-line when he ascended to the deck of the schooner is that the thought he had entertained when he proposed going aboard included a hope that he might see the girl again. This, to a man of Mr. Crump's temperament, was sufficient to impel him to climb the foremast if necessary.

She was not in evidence when he looked about, after securing the line from the *Jupiter*. No one was in evidence, except the unbending individual at the wheel, who watched him for a moment with indifference and then gazed over his head, as if dismissing him from a mind already fully engaged.

It was but natural that Mr. Crump, having come this far, felt that his errand would be only half-accomplished if he had to leave the schooner without seeing her, and that he was moved by an impulse to go farther. With the impulse came the thought that he could excuse his delay with an explanation to Captain Tupper that he had had to rouse out some of the crew to help him.

She was not forward—that was certain; therefore she must be aft. He stepped across the deck to a point where, because of the intervention of the companion-house, he was out of the helmsman's range of vision; then he tip-toed back and glanced along one side of the after-deck. She was not there. He went to the other side. Neither was she there.

Obviously she must be below, and, with the idea of paying a quick visit to the cabin and surprizing her, he entered the companionway. A few steps led down to a small vestibule. At the left was the galley, its occupant absent, although the fire was going and there were pots on the range; at the right was a dark compartment, evidently a storeroom. In front stood the door to the cabin. This door was unlatched; he could hear voices, and, through a very narrow slit which closed and opened with the slight movement of the ship, he saw several men of a group gathered in the center of the room.

He paused in indecision. He felt that she was in there, and that he would be welcome. He even indulged in the fancy that she probably was sitting curled up in a big chair with a novel and a box of chocolates—this being his idea of the manner in which demure young women whiled away their idle hours. But, on the other hand, the men inside—foreigners, all of them, he supposed—might look on it as an intrusion. They were an odd lot where women were concerned, he knew.

And then she herself assisted him out of his quandary by emerging from the storeroom at his side.

He had surprized her once before; he now surprized her again. She did not start, but she stopped quickly, and her eyes regarded him with blank astonishment. He had turned at the sound of her step. Now he smiled eagerly in recognition and was in time to see the look of astonishment change to something else that checked his smile.

It lasted only an instant, but it gave him an unpleasant sensation that not even the

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return to her eyes of their familiar gentle, half-shy expression could entirely dispel. She murmured something, and gave him her hand—her left hand, because with her right she was feeling for the knob of the cabin door to pull it shut.

As it happened, her gaze being on his face, she misjudged the distance. Her hand came in contact with the door, and the impetus it received, combined with the motion of the ship, caused it to swing wide open.

Mr. Crump looked into the cabin. What he saw was an ordinary ship's room with a long dining-table, covered with a red table-cloth, in the center. At the other end of the table, facing him, was the captain of the schooner, and gathered about him and along the sides of the table a collection of evil-appearing men, presumably the crew of the vessel. On the table, glittering and blazing against the red cloth, was a heap of jewels.

Into Mr. Crump's mind came a swift recollection of Captain Tupper's words about the diamond robberies. Then he became aware that every man in the room was staring at him. At the same instant he felt, rather than saw, the girl spring behind him. He stood irresolute for the period of a breath; then wheeled and leaped for the steps. But the girl had swung the doors of the companionway closed and snapped a padlock over the hasp. She stood on the top step, and greeted him with a mocking laugh.

"You had your nerve, all right," she said viciously; "but it don't get you far—not with this bunch."

She spoke a few words sharply in a language he did not understand, addressing the men in the cabin. Her meaning was plain enough, and he turned just as half a dozen men threw themselves upon him. He landed a smash on the jaw of the first that came, driving him back headlong into the others and stemming their rush for an instant; then they closed in on him. The knowledge that he was trapped made him fight with savage desperation.

Above all he was mad—mad clear through because of the girl. She had tricked him with her quiet ways, her modest manner, her deceitful eyes. He had said she was old-fashioned. Bah! She was a thief. With a snarl he plugged his fist full in the face of a dark-skinned fellow who was springing at him with murder in his scowl.

But then something heavy crashed on his head from behind and he dropped, limp and unconscious, to the floor.

He awoke to the realization that his head was aching horribly and lying in something wet and sticky. He opened his eyes, recalled what had happened and closed them immediately. He was on the floor over against the wall, as if dragged there out of the way. By peering cautiously from beneath half-closed lids he could see that the table had been cleared of the jewels, and that most of the men had gone out.

The girl was talking rapidly to the others—oh, she could talk, if she wanted to—apparently giving directions. Even the man he had thought was her father, who had come out on the tug with her, was listening attentively. Everything indicated that she was in authority. And Mr. Crump, who had taken her for a timid, reserved little thing, groaned inwardly in complete humiliation.

The light of the companionway, now open, was obscured suddenly, and down the steps came a figure he recognized as Captain Tupper's. There was a sack over his head, and his hands were tied behind him. Escorting him were two of the schooner's crew.

When the sack was removed, Mr. Crump had reason to be proud of him. Helpless as he was, he looked from one to the other of the ill-favored set without a trace of flinching. Indeed, he strode unafraid to the captain of the *Exeter* and demanded—

"What do you mean by this?"

The other answered:

"I have decided, my dear Captain, to keep you as my guest. Perhaps I shall let you go by and by; perhaps not." He spoke with a foreign accent. Mr. Crump could not see him, but imagined he shrugged his shoulders. "In the meantime you will make yourself comfortable."

Captain Tupper swore. Evidently he caught sight of his mate lying on the floor, for his next question, with something in his voice that further endeared him to Mr. Crump, was—

"What have you done to him?"

There was no reply. Mr. Crump heard some of the men step forward, and Captain Tupper was pushed across the cabin toward the door of a stateroom. Once he stopped.

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"You'll pay for this, sir!" he snapped.

Then he was shoved inside the room, and the door locked on him.

Mr. Crump, reflecting that Captain Tupper had not seen the jewels, and probably had no suspicion of what was going on, could picture his perplexity. The fact that Mr. Crump himself, by yielding to a chronic susceptibility about which he had been plentifully warned, had drawn him into the situation did not, however, add comfort to the mate's reflections.

In turn the engineer of the tug, Tony, the cook and the fireman were brought into the cabin. This completed the crew of the *Jupiter*. Mr. Crump, seeing that they were not bound, thought of jumping to his feet, crying to them to join him, and fighting their way back to the tug, to rescue Captain Tupper later. But when he tentatively sought to lift his head from the floor, he found that he was too weak to get up. The effort to move caused his head to throb, and he lapsed into semi-consciousness.

HE WAS roused by something striking his side. Very carefully he opened his eyes just enough to see out of them. Two persons were standing beside him. By his shoulder were the familiar outlines of a pair of men's shoes, and the legs of trousers; a little farther down the equally unmistakable outlines of daintier shoes, enclosing neatly-turned ankles.

Even in his predicament, Mr. Crump did not neglect to observe that they were gracefully modeled; but the blood went pumping through his temples the next moment when it came over him that what he had felt was one of those dainty shoes, propelled by that symmetrically-turned limb, kicking him as if he were a dog.

He heard her say, in English—

"What'll we do with this?"

"Does he know?" asked the voice of the captain.

"Sure he knows."

"Bad—very bad."

"We can't keep him here," she said.

"No."

"Well, there's one place there's plenty of room," she said.

The other hesitated.

"Yes," he said, in a low tone, little more than a whisper.

They moved away, leaving Mr. Crump in a state of despair. It had not been difficult for him to arrive at the meaning of her last remark, and the man's acquiescence.

Presently two of the crew came and, one taking his feet and the other his shoulders, lifted him and carried him out, none too gently. They bore him up the steps and on deck into the clear sunshine, which Mr. Crump thought, with anguish, he was never to see again, and headed for the rail.

At the last Mr. Crump made a feeble effort to resist. It was to no avail. They swung him up on the rail like a sack of flour and pushed him over.

He rubbed the side of the schooner in his fall and even below the surface, and, the cold water reviving him to some extent, he reached out with his hands and tried to cling to the wooden bulk gliding slowly past him. It, at least, was solid.

His fingers slipped along the rough timbers and were torn by fine splinters, but he did not feel the hurt. In the confusion of vague ideas that possessed his dazed mind, there was one that was sufficiently distinct: that he was a long, long swim from shore, and he was very weak.

At the thought of the death that lay in wait for him, panic seized him, and he clawed frantically at the hull. But there was nothing to grasp. The vessel continued to move forward relentlessly, and he, pawing with blind frenzy and bobbing up and down, half-choked with water, was carried aft.

He was borne around the curve of the stern. He tried to catch one of the pintles, and missed it; he then collided with the rudder and bumped off its flat side. He saw his last hope go. And then, just as he was sweeping past, in the little swirl made by the drag of the rudder, his hand, just beneath the surface, came in contact with the projecting end of a stout bolt, fastening a band about the massive fabric, and held.

He managed to remove his belt and, having buckled it, put it over the end of the bolt and in an overlapping joint of the band on the other side of the rudder, thus making a loop, into which he inserted his arm. And there he clung. Above him towered the counter of the vessel; before him the swelling shape of the hull, pitted with age and the hammering of many seas; elsewhere space and water, nothing but space and water.

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The creaking rudder swung from side to side, trailing him to and fro, like the tail of an animal endeavoring to dislodge a fly. Already he felt himself growing numb with the cold. He muttered words of encouragement, and his teeth chattered so much he could hardly say them.

Fighting against the lethargy that was stealing over him, he shifted his position that he might look about him. The shore seemed an appalling distance. Near it, and much too far away for him to hope to make himself seen by any one on board, was a small boat. He passed it by. In the other direction, even farther off, was another vessel, a mere speck on the water. This was all.

He again turned his gaze on the small boat near the shore and wondered if he had any possible chance of swimming to it. The more he pondered the less he believed he could succeed. But, with something like a sob and with a little prayer, he made ready to let go.

At this instant, as if in answer to his prayer, he felt the prompting of an idea. He looked once more at the small boat to identify it. Then with his disengaged hand he searched his pockets and drew out a good-sized jack-knife. Gripping it firmly, he began to rap, under water, on the metal band that encircled the rudder. For a long time he kept it up, ceasing only when the knife slipped from his numbed hand and sank.

His left arm was still bent and rigid in the loop. He had strength enough to lift his other arm to the edge of the rudder and clutch it; then, resting his head on it, so that his mouth was free of the water, he fell asleep.

"EASY, now," said a voice; "I'll get this piece of bandage around that cracked dome o' yours, an' then you can snooze all you want to. You come pretty near takin' the long nap that time, my boy; that's what you did."

Mr. Crump learned, to his surprize, that he was the person thus addressed, and at the same time made one or two other minor discoveries: that he was kicking as hard as he could, like a man swimming, and that something was covering his eyes. Not wanting his eyes covered, he raised his hand to push the thing away.

"Take it off," he said, weakly.

"Oh, well," came the voice, "I don't know how to make these fancy bandages. When I wrap a head, I run it straight around. But go on, have a look; it'll do you good."

Mr. Crump sat up, with assistance, and ascertained that he was wrapped in gray blankets; that attending him was a big, good-natured policeman; and that he was on a police-boat, from the forward deck of which a mounted gun was serenely contemplating a pleasing prospect. Just ahead were the schooner *Exeter* and the tug *Jupiter*, the one appended to the other by a five-inch manila hawser. The entire procession was headed back to port.

Mr. Crump looked to the side and begged to be helped to his feet. The policeman obligingly lifted him and supported him. And then Mr. Crump, elevating his right arm stiffly, waved it feebly. From a small boat lying toward the shore, on which, according to Captain Tupper, certain experiments in submarine telegraphy were being carried on, came at once—as if somebody was watching Mr. Crump through glasses—the vigorous, cheerful flutter of a handkerchief. Mr. Crump grinned.

"He's a good bug," he said enigmatically.

He glanced into the cabin of the police-boat. Several persons were there.

"That's her," said the policeman. "That's the queen of the gang that done the business. Spanish. Famous. And that's her right-hand man. Pose as father and daughter—but they ain't. We've got 'em all—and we've got the jewels, too."

She was dressed just as she had been on the tug, and she looked just the same. She sat, too, in the same attitude, gazing out of the window at the bay, a pensive expression on her face. And, as Mr. Crump regarded her, she raised her eyes to his, just as before, as if to excuse herself for her inattention. Her eyes seemed to become larger. They enveloped him with a smile—friendly, tender and appealing. He felt himself drawn.

He clutched at the policeman's arm.

"All right," he said; "wrap it straight around—tight!"

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ROOF *of the* WORLD

A Complete Novelette

by

H·A·LAMB

Author of "The White Khan," "Changa Nor," etc.

For three times a thousand years the camels and men have passed in their caravans by the Jallat Kum. Where Taklamaklan rises to the mountains, the caravans journey by the Jallat Kum.

The camels go and leave their dung to be food for the fires of those who come after. The men die and their bones dry in the sands. Under the star eyes of Jitti Karakchi are the Jallat Kum. And what is it that the stars have not seen? Nay, they have seen the men and camels of three thousand years ago come to the Jallat Kum again.

For the stars and the Jallat Kum and the spirits of the dead are as one.

From the book of Batur Madi, priest of the Kashgar lamasery.

IT WAS the Spring hunt of the Tatars in the year of the Ape, at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Tatar riders had circled through the steppe by the blue waters of Kobdo Nor, at the southern boundary of their lands, and had made a good kill of antelope, wild sheep and yaks. And in their circle they came upon a Chutuktu lama of the Holy City of Lhassa with his followers.

And this, says the priest, Batur Madi, was the beginning of the strange events that brought Khlit, the Cossack of the Curved Saber, to Taklamaklan and trouble to the lamasery of Kashgar. A trouble which only ended with the death of many men at the Roof of the World.

The setting sun was casting its level rays across the steppe grass as the last of the beaters brought in their game on the backs of pack-horses. The game was piled by the shore of the lake where Khlit, the Cossack of the Curved Saber, and Kha Khan of the Jun-gar Tatars, had ordered the night's encampment. Through the ranks of the hunters spurred a powerful man with a scarred face, who reined his horse to a halt before the *kibitka* of Khlit.

"Our outriders, lord," he cried to the Cossack, who was standing before his tent, "have come upon one who says that he is from the Holy City. He wears the orange robe of a Chutuktu lama, and his name is Dongkor Gelong."

Khlit raised his gray head and scanned the messenger keenly. Although his costume of furred coat with wide sash and horse-hide boots was similar to those of his companions, the Cossack was taller. His hard gray eyes were not aslant like those of the Tatars. He had taken off his heavy woolen cap and his gray hair hung to his powerful, stooped shoulders. A veined hand tugged thoughtfully at his drooping, white mustache. The deep lines of his browned face alone showed his age.

"Dongkor Gelong," he said in his deep voice, "must be the envoy of the Dalai Lama whom we have come to meet. Take a hundred horsemen, Chagan, and bring him to my *kibitka* with all due honor. Tell the khans of the Jun-gar that he has come."

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The rider wheeled his mount and spurred away, leaping the piles of game with the ease of a man who had been weaned on mare's milk. But the tidings had already spread through the encampment. The Tatar khans left the game they had taken and hurried to the Kha Khan's tent, before which the standard was planted. Ranging themselves in a semicircle, they watched for the coming of the envoy from the Holy City.

Khlit's searching gaze scrutinized the eager faces of the Tatars. They were grim men, these of the Jun-gar, descendants of Ghenghis Khan and the Golden Horde. The broad faces of many bore battle-scars. They had been more numerous when Khlit came to them, for they had been with him in many battles. His leadership over them rested on two things: his consummate skill as a warrior, bred of fighting from the Cossack Ukraine, Persia, Turkestan to the Tatar steppe, and his descent from Kaidu, the hero of the Tatars, whose curved sword he bore.

By sheer daring and shrewdness Khlit had held the Tatar clans together against their enemies. His craft had earned him the name of Wolf among men bred to war and conquest. And had earned him as well many enemies, chiefly among the priesthood, for Khlit alone of the Tatar khans carried the gold cross of a Christian about his neck under his tunic.

The throng of hunters parted and a cavalcade appeared, headed by Chagan, the sword-bearer, and a man in bright robes mounted on a white camel, who wore a crystal rosary on his chest. Two attendants in black and orange robes followed, an array of spearmen on camels trailing behind them.

As the white camel knelt, Khlit raised his right hand in greeting, carrying it to his mouth. He did not advance from his tent, and, seeing this, the lama remained by the head of his camel instead of coming forward. The gaze of the Tatars went eagerly from one to the other as they matched glances.

Dongkor Gelong was unlike the *shamans* and monks whom Khlit had seen on the steppe. He was a tall man, stout and richly robed in furs and Chinese silks; moreover, he had the carriage of one accustomed to command. He had the smooth olive skin of a Chinese and the broad frame of a Tibetan. He wore the close-fitting orange hat of a lama of the Gedun Dubpa monastery, the home of the Dalai Lama. It was evident that his stately appearance had already produced a strong effect on the Tatars, to whom the name of the Dalai Lama was an earnest of supernatural power.

"Welcome to the camp of the Jun-gar, Dongkor Gelong," observed Khlit gravely in Tatar, which the other understood readily. "We have had a good hunt, and choice meats will be prepared for you. Tonight we will summon a *kurultai* council of the khans, and hear the word of the Dalai Lama who has sent you."

Dongkor Gelong inclined his dark head courteously.

"It is well that you should hear the word of the almighty Tsong Khapa, O Kha Khan. Although it is many *li* from the Jun-gar steppe to the Holy City, the power of the Dalai Lama to safeguard his servants knows no limits of space."

Evening saw a bustling preparation of mutton and horseflesh in the camp by the lake. When the envoy and his attendants had been feasted, the expectant khans assembled around a circle of fires built in front of Khlit's *kibitka*. The Cossack and Dongkor Gelong sat together in the center of the circle. Behind Khlit, as was customary, loomed the stalwart form of the sword-bearer, Chagan, accompanied this time by the two Chubil Khans who had come with the envoy from Lhassa.

At the right and left of the two leaders were seated the khans of the Jun-gar, headed by Berang, of the Ordus, and the chieftains of the Hoshot, Torgot and Tchoros hordes. Behind these were ranged the lesser personages: cloaked *shamans* and tawny masters of the horse-herds, together with warriors of the rank of khans who were not leaders of a horde.

The *kurultai* of the Jun-gar was assembled.

II

DONGKOR GELONG stepped into the semicircle of light. To the watchers it seemed as if his eyes were closed, but the lama had not failed to scrutinize his listeners shrewdly. He faced toward the south, where was Lhassa, and drew a parchment from the breast

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of his robe. This he pressed reverently to his forehead.

"To the Khans of the Jun-gar," he read aloud, "greeting from the almighty Tsong Khapa, Dalai Lama of the Gedun Dubpa and keeper of the sacred *Kandjur* books."

Khlit stroked the scabbard across his knees pensively. He noted, as did all the listeners, that the Dalai Lama had omitted mention of the Kha Khan in his greeting. This might have been, thought Khlit, because it was the council of khans and not himself who had appealed to the master of Lhassa.

"The messenger of the khans," went on the musical voice of Dongkor Gelong, "has brought to the Dalai Lama word of the trouble of the Jun-gar. The word that the Tatar hordes are threatened with doom and the loss of the lands which are their birthright. In their trouble they have rightly asked aid of the only one who can restore their power."

A murmur of agreement greeted this. Khlit chewed at his black pipe impassively. Still the lama had made no mention of him, treating the matter as one between the khans and the Dalai Lama. He did not look at Dongkor Gelong, watching instead the attentive faces of the Tatars.

"On the east the khans have complained," continued the lama, "that the Ming armies of China have forced them across the great desert of Kobi. To the south the Khirghiz clans have invaded the Jun-gar steppe where the children of the mighty Kha Khan, Ghenghis, were accustomed to graze their herds."

Another murmur, louder this time, greeted the mention of the great Tatar conqueror. Was it by chance that Dongkor Gelong spoke first of Ghenghis Khan, before the living Kha Khan of the Jun-gar? Had he meant to compare the two in the mind of his audience?

"To the west, by Tomsk and the Yenissei, the traders and soldiers of Muskovy are taking the lands of the Jun-gar. Many of the hordes have deserted the Jun-gar, taking with them their *tumens* of horsemen. Only on the north are there no enemies. And there is the land of ice—the Dead World beyond the frozen waters of Baikal. The power of the Jun-gar trembles like a reed when the wind blows. It is time they asked for aid from the glorious spiritual king whose name is heard with reverence from the Great Wall to the cities of the Moguls, from the Roof of the World to the sea."

Chagan, the sword-bearer, was a man of tranquil wits, but he stirred uneasily. Truly, he thought, Dongkor Gelong had the voice of a golden eagle, for he painted the evils that beset the Jun-gar with an all-seeing eye. Chagan did not perceive, as the envoy went on with his oration, how cleverly Dongkor Gelong played upon the name of Ghenghis Khan, and the power of the master of Lhassa.

But it was clear to Chagan that Dongkor Gelong was appealing to the khans and not to the Kha Khan, Khlit, called by them the Wolf. Many glances besides his own sought out the impassive Cossack. The allegiance of the khans to Khlit, Chagan knew, was strong by reason of the Kha Khan's leadership in battle. Khlit had broken the power of the *shaman* priesthood. But the *shamans*, with their conjuring tricks, were allied to the Dalai Lama as the fleas on the belly of a horse were kin to the horse.

So much Chagan was aware of. He, like Berang and the other khans, did not choose to realize that their present plight was the fault of the jealousy and waning power of the hordes, rather than any mistake in leadership by Khlit. Chagan leaned forward eagerly as Dongkor Gelong came to the end of his parchment and paused, one hand uplifted for his final word.

"Wisely have the khans of the Jun-gar," he cried, "appealed to the precept of the gods. It was well they asked for an oracle. The question has been put to the oracle in Gedun Dubpa. The sacred ashes have formed the answering words, which have been truly read by the clergy of the Yellow Cap. This is the answer."

A breathless silence greeted this. Khlit raised his keen eyes and scanned the lama. Dongkor Gelong turned and pointed at him.

"In this way may the Jun-gar restore their power and safeguard their lands from the Khirghiz. Like the sun and moon, the Lama and the Kha Khan should mount the sky together. The Kha Khan, by order of the Lama, must do this."

He swung his long-sleeved arm until it pointed to the south.

"In the fifth moon of the year of the Ape the Wolf of the Jun-gar must go to the citadel of Talas on the Jallat Kum, where

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the river Tarim goes to its grave in the sands of Taklamaklan Desert. There he will find aid for the Jun-gar. In this manner the oracle has spoken."

Profound silence reigned in the council. The dark faces of the khans showed blank surprize and a dawning hope. Dongkor Gelong regarded them gravely, with folded arms.

"Truly, lords of the Jun-gar," he said in a low voice, "this is little short of a miracle. For at Lhassa none save the gods knew that the Kha Khan Khlit was surnamed the Wolf. Since I have come, I have been told that is the case. Such is the wisdom of the gods. Now, to aid his people, the Kha Khan must choose those among you whom he can most trust and travel to Talas by the Taklamaklan Desert, beyond the Thian Shan, to the south."

There was an excited stir among the *shamans* at mention of the verification of the prophecy. From somewhere back in their ranks came a voice.

"We have heard the oracle of Lhassa. What is the answer of the Kha Khan?"

At this all eyes were turned to Khlit. The Cossack did not move to rise, for it was not his custom to speak hastily. Tugging at his mustache, he considered the message of Dongkor Gelong. The city of Talas he had never heard of, but it must lie a week's fast riding to the south, if it was beyond the Thian Shan Mountains. The Taklamaklan Desert, he had heard, was a portion of the great Kobi, at a high altitude. It should not be hard to find the river Tarim at the edge of the Taklamaklan and follow it to its end. So much was clear.

The message of the Dalai Lama was little less than a command. The master of Lhassa was head of the Buddhist priests in Mongolia, China and Central Asia. To disobey would be to risk the allegiance of his own people. And it was possible that the Dalai Lama knew of assistance that Khlit could gain at Talas. The Dalai Lama knew many things—from the eyes and ears of the Tsong Khapa, the priesthood of the lamas.

Khlit's shrewdness probed the words of Dongkor Gelong for their inner meaning. The Dalai Lama must have heard that Khlit was a Christian. As such, he would not be favored by the clergy of the Holy City. Did Dongkor Gelong hope that Khlit would refuse to undertake the mission proposed by the oracle? Or did he reason that, having gained aid through the Dalai Lama, the Cossack's prestige would suffer?

Khlit got to his feet and surveyed the ranks of the Tatars. Dongkor Gelong folded his arms and waited.

"Harken, Dongkor Gelong," spoke Khlit slowly. "Look into the sky and tell me what you see."

As one the eyes of the Tatars flew upward, the firelight glaring white on their eye-balls.

"O Kha Khan," responded the lama composedly, "I see the crescent moon and Jitti Karaktchi, the great bear among the stars. And it is the fifth moon of the year of the Ape. The Ice Pass that leads to the Jallat Kum will be open for your coming."

"Do you see the sun, O man of wisdom?" growled the Cossack.

"Nay; how could that be? The earth is in the dark, Erlik clouds of night."

"Truly have you spoken, Dongkor Gelong. Then tell me, how can it be that the sun and the moon mount the sky together? Or the Kha Khan and the Dalai Lama rule one people?"

III

THE Chutuktu Lama smiled and turned to the assembled warriors.

"Nay," he answered promptly, "when the moon steals into the light of day, her radiance dies because of the glory of the sun. Is not the almighty Tsong Khapa the father of many nations? In all the world there is not a king with a glory such as his. For the Dalai Lama knows the wisdom of former ages, being incarnate. The light of his wisdom points to the citadel of Talas as the salvation of the Jun-gar."

A murmur of agreement echoed this, in which the *shamans* joined the loudest. The more warlike khans stirred uneasily and looked at Khlit.

"The wisdom of the master of Lhassa is beyond my knowing, O envoy of the Yellow Hat," said Khlit slowly. "My skill is in arranging battles and the clash of armies on the steppe. Ask the Jun-gar where lies the host of Hang-Hi, general of the Son of Heaven. Or the banners of Li Jusong. They have fallen before the yak-tailed banner of Tatary. How has the Tsong Khapa thought, in his wisdom, that we may have aid from Talas? Who are the people of Talas? I know them not."

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Dongkor Gelong bent one cotton-wrapped knee and bowed his head.

"I came as the bearer of words more precious than the seven substances, because they were inspired by the gods. Who am I to seek to explain them?"

From the ranks of listeners came the voice of the hidden *shaman*.

"Question not what is written, O Kha Khan."

Khlit stared at his followers moodily.

"You have sworn an oath, O Khans of the Jun-gar, that my word should be law in the *kurultai* of the Tatars. It is not in written words but in the fellowship of warriors that a khan may put his trust. Nay, tonight I will not ask the advice of the *kurultai*. Does a wolf seek the will of the pack when he makes a kill? I alone will choose my course."

In the deep silence that followed this, Dongkor Gelong raised his arms in alarmed surprize.

"Will you dare to disobey the Tsong Khapa?"

"I have chosen my path," responded Khlit shortly. "It lies to Talas. But I will go alone."

Cries of protest greeted this. The khans of the inner circle sprang to their feet, protesting. Berang of the Ordus declared that he would go with Khlit.

"Nay, Kha Khan," objected Dongkor Gelong. "It was the wish of the Dalai Lama himself that you should take followers whom you could trust. The journey will be through the lands of Iskander Khan and Bassanghor Khan of the Khirghiz who have violated your boundaries——"

"I have chosen," growled Khlit. "And I will go tonight."

The news spread swiftly through the encampment. The Tatar hunters gathered about the *kibitka* and watched silently while Khlit arranged a few things in his saddle-bags—some meat smoked until it was dry, milk curds hardened into cakes, a flask of kumiss, spare powder for his pistols—and selected a horse from several that Chagan brought him. Khlit had never forsaken his fondness for a horse in favor of the hardier camel.

Still in silence the khans watched him mount. Dongkor Gelong and Berang said a few words of farewell. Khlit thought that he caught a disappointed light in the lama's eyes. Was Dongkor Gelong sorry that he had agreed to go to Talas?

The stolid faces of his followers veiled strong feelings. Hope, disappointment, relief and uneasiness were in the glances they fixed on him. If he had not gone, to a man they would have turned against him—such was their faith in the word of the Dalai Lama. But, now that the old Kha Khan was leaving on his mission, some felt misgiving.

Khlit sprang from the ground into the saddle—a trick of his Cossack days—not sitting, but standing erect in the saddle. The horse wheeled and darted away from the *kibitka* through the tents. There was hardly a Tatar who could not have done as much. Yet the trick stirred their fancy and a hoarse shout of approval followed him as he vanished into the dark.

Once clear of the encampment, Khlit reined in his horse and seated himself in the saddle. He cast a shrewd eye up at the stars and struck off across the plain to the south. The steppe here was level as the surface of a lake. A warm breeze stirred the lush grass, and his horse sniffed heavily of the fragrant air. As he rode, Khlit struck flint and steel and lighted his long-stemmed pipe. Thus did Cossacks always ride.

The magic of the steppe warmed Khlit's blood. It was the same endless plain that stretched to the Ukraine, lighted by the same stars. It had been Khlit's home, and here he was always happy. He muttered to himself—he had never been known to sing—fragments of Cossack songs. And then he suddenly drew his mount to a halt.

His keen ears had caught the sound of riders behind him. He judged there were several and that they were coming at a rapid pace. Alert for possible danger, he turned toward the sound and drew one of the pistols he carried in his sash.

The patter of hoofs neared him and presently he made out a group of dark shadows. At first he guessed them to be riderless horses escaped from the encampment. Then he saw that one horse had a rider. The man saw him at the same moment and halted the small cavalcade he was leading.

"Chagan!" swore Khlit, peering at the other's bulk in the gloom. "Devil take the dog! Why do you follow me?"

The sword-bearer laughed uneasily.

"Lord," he growled, "you said before

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Dongkor Gelong that you would ride to Talas alone. Wherefore I slipped from the camp and followed with extra horses, so that none would see me. Almost, I lost you in the dark."

"I need but one horse, Chagan. Get back to the camp, where there is horseflesh to be eaten."

Chagan laid his heavy hand on Khlit's knee.

"Nay, lord," he said gruffly; "you have said that a fat hound hunts but ill. Since the time of Ghenghis, when did not the sword-bearer follow the Kha Khan in battle or hunt?"

"Yet I give you this as a duty—go back."

"Harken, lord." Chagan moved nearer. "I have a thought, that you had best make haste. I have listened at the camp——"

"Dolt, offspring of a wild ass! Speak not to me of your thoughts. Silence is sweeter than the bellow of an ass."

Khlit, knowing the uselessness of arguing with the sturdy sword-bearer, put spurs to his horse and sped away into the darkness. Chagan lost no time in following.

A streak of crimson showed to the east. The light of the stars paled overhead. From the occasional thickets that the riders passed, bird notes trilled. The crimson spread into yellow and violet. The rays of the morning sun shot up over the plain and showed Chagan with his led horses galloping a scant mile behind Khlit. By shifting, as he rode, from one mount to another, he had managed to keep within sight of the better-mettled steed of the Cossack.

Once Chagan sighted Khlit, he drew up rapidly. Seeing this, the Cossack stopped. His first words to the sword-bearer showed that his mood had altered.

"Devil roast me, Chagan, but this is a ride fit for an emperor. Hey, man, you would come to Talas? Ride then—ride! Let the horse leap between your knees. Light your pipe and feel the kiss of the harlot wind in your face. Ride to meet Erlik on his black steed of death. Hey, Tatar, come!"

Taking two of the horses from the sword-bearer, who echoed his words with an exultant shout, Khlit led the way to the south. Through the day they rode, after the manner of their kind, sleeping at intervals in the saddle and chewing on the dried meat when they were hungry.

In this manner Khlit, called the Wolf, and Chagan, the sword-bearer, made their way to the passes of the Thian Shan Mountains, swimming the river Ili, and crossing the Southern steppe, to the Ice Pass. To the sands of Taklamaklan and the Jallat Kum.

This was the route from Khamil south to Talas and the caravan track, as written in the annals of Batur Madi, who had inscribed after the words Jallat Kum a mark to ward off evil spirits. For Batur Madi declared that the bones of many men were drying in the Jallat Kum and that the caravans from the east went a week's journey to the north to avoid the Jallat Kum, where no men went willingly, unless they knew that their graves were dug there.

IV

OF THE numerous passes leading through the Thian Shan Mountains to the south, Khlit chose the Ice Pass mentioned by Dongkor Gelong, for two reasons. It was well to the north of the Tarim, beneath the snow-crest of the mighty Khan Tengri, and rather beyond the territory of the Khirghiz chieftains. While the defiles of the pass might well be infested with mountaineers—who were, of course, robbers—there was less danger of their meeting their enemies the Khirghiz. And Chagan pointed out that it was the quickest way to the Tarim.

Indeed Chagan was unmistakably anxious to push on with all speed. The two riders found that their choice was justified. They gained the southern end of the defile with no greater loss than two of their horses, given as toll to a chieftain of the Khan Tengri who had not demanded more because he saw that the two Tatars were well-armed and disposed to use their weapons. The high altitude of the pass, where glaciers pressed the sides of the gorge and freshets flooded the gulleys, hindered their progress.

Chagan gave an exclamation of satisfaction as they began the downward path to the south, their woolen coats drawn close against the chill winds that whistled down the pass at their backs. Khlit glanced at him curiously, for the sword-bearer, who had been urging haste, was not the man to be anxious about possible danger.

"Nay, lord," Chagan answered his blunt query, "the lamas say that spirits infest

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the mountain passes, and I saw no idols fastened to the trees by the way to ward them off. So——"

"So you lie like a Mussulman merchant of Samarkand. You have ridden the flesh from your horse's belly. I have watched you counting the days of our journey on your fingers as if a young maiden awaited your coming in a comfortable *yurt*. Speak from your mind what is true, Chagan, and save lies for thieves and *shamans*."

The sword-bearer's slant eyes widened guiltily, and he looked involuntarily back along the trail down which they had come. Khlit's glance followed his. The pass was empty of all save a hovering raven. Before this, Khlit had assured himself that they were not followed. Moreover, their speed had been such that none save a Tatar or Khirghiz on picked mounts could have kept near them. Why, then, had Chagan been uneasy?

"When the Dalai Lama commands, lord," muttered the other, "it is well to hasten."

Khlit laughed and shook his shoulders lightly.

"Aye. There is meat to that bone, Tatar. The words of the Dalai Lama are such as to blind the eyes of children or fools. But I am neither one nor the other. Truly the words of a magician are a veil. To read the truth you must tear the veil aside."

Chagan blinked and spat forcibly.

"The Dalai Lama is not a magician, lord. I have seen the lamas raise up a man who was dead. They know all that happens in the mountains. We must guard well our tongues, for this is their land."

"Lamas, *shamans*, or conjurers—they are all one, Chagan. Hey, their tricks are as many as the wiles of the steppe fox! Yet to one who knows they are but tricks there is no danger. Wherefore I would have come alone."

Chagan turned this over in his mind and shook his head dubiously.

"Nay, lord," he said, and hesitated. "You came by these mountains to Tatary, men say. Did you see the city of Talas?"

"Nay, nor heard of it. The Dalai Lama is fond of riddles, Chagan. When we see Talas we may know the meaning of this riddle. Not before."

From the foot-hills of the Thian Shan, called in the annals of Batur Madi the Kok Shal Tau, Khlit and Chagan glimpsed in the distance the wide valley of the Tarim. Here was a country different from that they had come through. The level steppe gave way to broken, wooded ridges, through which the horses took their way slowly. The defiles gleamed brown with sandstone pinnacles of rock. Game was thick and Chagan succeeded in bringing down an *arkhan*—a species of mountain-sheep strange to them both, but eatable.

They came out abruptly from the poplars and willows of the forest to a wide sweep of sluggish water. Neither boats nor signs of habitations were visible, and the two took their course down-stream, noting that the forest thinned as they went.

The current also lost its force, and the footing became sandy. The poplars gave way to tamarisks. Khlit pushed ahead, anxious to see the end of the river, where Dongkor Gelong had promised that they would find Talas.

The silence of the place stilled Chagan's tongue. Khlit had never been fond of words. The Cossack surveyed their surroundings keenly as they advanced, looking back with a frown at the distant summits of the Thian Shan. Truly, this was a strange place. For on the Tarim they did not meet any horsemen. Even when they came to the end of the river at a willow thicket, there was no sign of habitation. Why had they been sent to such a spot?

Chagan pulled up his tired horse with an oath. Khlit pushed ahead to the summit of a sand-dune beyond the thicket. Then he halted and leaned forward curiously.

The slight elevation of the dune gave him a view over the surrounding landscape. He saw that they were on the edge of a desert, for the tamarisk trees became scattering and a series of dunes stretched before him like the summits of waves on an ocean. A few paces below him was a rough shepherd's *aul*—tree branches and thorns woven into a small enclosure in which were a score of sheep, a horse, a felt tent and a man in tattered woolen garments asleep.

Khlit trotted up to the enclosure and scanned the man. He lay flat on his face: a short, stocky figure, legs wrapped in soiled cloths and a dingy black *kollah* on his tousled head. A fire of sheep dung smoldered near him.

The rustle of branches, as the Cossack's

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horse nibbled at the fence, startled the fellow from his sleep, and he sprang to his feet grasping at a short spear. Khlit raised his right hand reassuringly, and after a careful inspection the man advanced gingerly toward him, holding the weapon poised. Chagan came up and grinned at sight of the scared shepherd.

"Here is a poor kind of city, lord," he grunted, "for aught but fleas. Can the man speak Tatar?"

It was soon apparent that the shepherd could not. But he showed a glimmer of understanding at the Uigur that Khlit spoke—a dialect much used by the traveling merchants of Central Asia and therefore widely known. The Cossack questioned him to the best of his ability and turned to Chagan.

"The rascal is slower of wit than of tongue, Chagan. He is a Dungan—a Chinese Mussulman—and he lives here because his father was here before him. Azim, as he calls himself, says that the main caravan track from China to Samarkand runs past here, a short distance out in the desert."

"What does he know of Talas?"

Khlit stroked the scabbard of his curved sword thoughtfully, his eyes on the swart face of Azim.

"He has heard the name of Talas. It lies a half-day's ride into the desert, away from the setting sun. He has sent men there before. They came, he says, for what is buried in Talas. And here they have stayed. What that is he does not know, or he will not tell."

"But Dongkor Gelong swore that it was at the end of the Tarim."

"Aye—and here Azim's words have a ring of truth. For he says that the Tarim formerly ran further into the desert. Our way lies along its river bed."

As the sun was still high, the two pressed on, leaving the shepherd staring at them stupidly over his *aul*. They found that Azim spoke the truth. They came upon a wide ravine in the sand-dunes where red sandstone cropped through the soil. Khlit chose a path along the bank of the river bed, wishing to see the nature of the country he entered.

The sun gleamed redly behind their backs when they came out upon a dune higher than the others, and Khlit pointed to the river-bed. Chagan peered at it inquisitively. Here was in truth the end of the Tarim.

The smooth sand of the dry river bed formed an arena in the gully under them. A few tamarisks clung to the slope. But at the farther end of the arena a small stream of black water, which was all that remained of the Tarim, sank into the ground.

The sword-bearer was about to urge his horse down the slope into the basin when Khlit touched him on the arm.

The Cossack pointed to the sides of the arena. The sand-dunes here presented a strange appearance. Pillars of rock stood upright in the gullies; square blocks of sandstone were scattered about. Further on, walls of stone in the form of buildings were visible. But the structures had no roofs.

On the summit of the hillock at the end of the river was a mass of masonry that had once been a tower. Ruins, nearly hidden in the sand, stretched on every quarter. Khlit laughed softly to himself.

"Hey, what think you of the citadel of Talas, Chagan?"

The sword-bearer gaped at the ruins and muttered under his breath. Clearly there had once been a city of size and importance here. Now he saw only the wrecks of dwellings, unroofed and buried in the sand. Silence hung heavily over the place.

Khlit dismounted from his horse and inspected the nearest remnant of a house. To Chagan the sight of the place was unaccountable, bordering on the uncanny. The desolate city seemed to him ill-omened. But Khlit remembered that he had heard that the sands of the Taklamaklan had been advancing into the foot-hills of the mountains. The Cossack guessed shrewdly that the attack of the sand had driven the inhabitants from the place, perhaps several hundred years ago.

It was now clear to Khlit what Dongkor Gelong had meant. The lama had said there was a place where the sands of the Taklamaklan join the mountains. And where the river Tarim sank to its grave. They had come to the place.

But why had the Dalai Lama directed them here? Talas had been without inhabitants certainly for several generations. No living person was to be seen save the miserable shepherd Azim. Where was the Jallat Kum? The caravan path might

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run near them, but there was no caravanserai in the ruined city of Talas. No human being stirred along the sand-dunes except themselves.

Khlit had said to Chagan that Talas would solve the riddle of the Tsong Khapa's words. But here was a deeper riddle. Khlit shook his shaggy head moodily, watching one of the horses which was descending to the basin for the tamarisk foliage that it had sighted. Chagan, too, eyed the horse. Suddenly both men stiffened alertly.

The animal had stepped out on the smooth, moist sand of the arena. As it did so it gave a shrill scream of terror. The sound cut the silence of the place sharply. Khlit swore.

The horse had sunk to its haunches in the sand. The surface of the soil ebbed around the beast in a sinister fashion as the horse struggled to free itself. Half its trunk was now engulfed. Its head reared frantically; then it sank down into the sand which closed over it with a dull murmur. The surface of the basin was again level and smooth.

Khlit whirled at the sound of a guttural laugh behind him. A few paces away Azim sat on his bedraggled pony. The shepherd pointed to the sand of the river bed grimly.

"Jallat Kum," he said.

V

If shadows are seen, there is danger if the owners of the shadows are hidden. Aye, even though they come with open hands, for shadows have no tongues with which to lie.

Khirghiz proverb.

CHAGAN yawned and stretched his limbs painfully. He pushed aside his sheepskin robe and stood up, staring with bleared eyes at the rising sun which had wakened him and stamping circulation into his booted legs. For the night on the Taklamaklan was cold.

The sword-bearer buckled his belt tight and looked around at the ruins of Talas with disgust written large on his broad face. He stiffened his muscles and shook his black tangle of hair like a dog. He was not a tall man, but his shoulders were knitted to an ox's neck, and his long arms were heavily thewed. Legs, bent to the shape of a horse's barrel, supported an erect and massive trunk. Men who had glanced only at his height and sleepy, pock-marked face had learned to their cost that the sword-bearer's strength lay in muscles invisible to the eye and in an inexorable, destructive energy when aroused.

Chagan gave vent to his disgust to Khlit when he had prepared some of the *arkhan* meat over a fire of tamarisk roots and added some water from a goatskin purchased from Azim to their scanty stock of kumiss.

"An ill place to water at—this," he growled. "The Jallat Kum of the Tarim river bed swallows a horse as Azim would gulp a milk curd. Ha! Azim stayed not when the stars came out. He likes not the ruins. By signs he made plain to me that it is an unholy spot, which the caravans avoid. Twice in the night I heard wailing and sighing as if the desert spirits that hamstring straying travelers were about us. By the head of Ghenghis Khan, I like it not."

Khlit finished the last of the meat and drank his share of the mare's milk calmly. Then he leaned back on the sand and scrutinized Chagan.

"How long, dog, have you been a breeder of lies? Am I a whispering maiden to be beguiled by words such as these? Not so. You have a thought, Chagan, in your thick head. You are trying to paint the thought in another guise. Why were you in a hurry to reach Talas? And now you talk of going hence."

Chagan juggled the kumiss flask sullenly.

"Last night," he repeated, "I wakened and heard a voice like that of a woman crying—crying and then singing. It was not far away. This is a cursed spot, for there is no woman here."

"I heard it not." Khlit took a twig from the fire and idly traced figures in the sand. "Harken, Chagan, I am neither magician nor oracle, but I will unravel the meaning of a riddle. It is a riddle of the master of Lhassa, who is monarch of many khans and squadrons of cavalry. Why did he send the message by Dongkor Gelong that I should come here?"

Chagan started to speak; then he thought better of it. Khlit studied his tracings in the sand idly.

"When a hunter seeks one wolf from the pack, he does not follow the pack. He sets a bait, and, when the wolf comes, he can then slay it. The master of Lhassa is

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crafty; he has the wisdom of many *shamans*. Yet it is hard to hide the bait that covers the snare. Harken, Chagan. The Jun-gar are a power on the steppe, midway between the Kallmarks and the Chinese. The Khirghiz are their own masters, yet they are not hostile to the Dalai Lama. From the Kha Khans before me, tribute in sheep, horses and cloths was sent to Lhassa. I have not sent it. When this was known, the Dalai Lama persuaded the Khirghiz to cross our frontiers for plunder."

Chagan nodded. Most of this he had known.

"The clergy of the Yellow Hat," went on the Cossack slowly, "are actual rulers of Kashgaria, which reaches as far north as the Thian Shan, and in Tibet to the south of the Taklamaklan. Also of portions of China by the headwaters of the Yang-tze River. To the northwest of Kashgaria and the northeast of the Yang-tze the Tsong Khapa, I have heard, has pulled his magician's veil over the Khan of the Kallmarks, and the Emperor of the Chinese. They believe he is the envoy of the gods upon earth. Such is the blindness even of a ruler of millions."

Khlit stuck his twig upright in the center of the figures he had been tracing.

"In the heart of the Tatar steppe between the Kallmarks and China is the land of the bowmen, the Jun-gar. Like an eagle flying above the mountains, the Dalai Lama has marked Jungaria for his priests. Already the khans of the *kurultai* council are overawed by his magician's tricks and the wiles of the *shamans*."

"But you are his enemy, lord," objected Chagan bluntly.

"Aye, for he sent the Khirghiz against us when the tribute stopped. Now the Dalai Lama has marked me as one who must be removed. The enmity of priests is more dangerous than the sting of a serpent. And I will not be a tribute-payer of Lhassa. We can not make this a war, Chagan, for the Jun-gar will not take up arms against the Dalai Lama; and, if we did, the Khirghiz and Kallmarks together have thrice our number of horsemen."

"They are crafty fighters," grunted Chagan. "Yet, they are not slaves to do the will of the master of Lhassa——"

"Nay; that is truth. But they have the taste of our lands and herds in their mouth. While the plundering is good, they will invade our boundaries. The Jun-gar are too far from Lhassa to enjoy the care of the Dalai Lama, yet he desires their lands for the Khirghiz and for himself. So he sent Dongkor Gelong with all his mummery to fetch me and those that I trusted here to the desert. Why? He would remove the horns from the cattle he wishes to slaughter."

Khlit stood up and stretched himself.

"Aye, there is the veil of words that covered the trap. Chagan, I smell treachery. Long have I smelled danger; the wind whispers tidings of evil. Ha! We have come to the trap, you and I."

"Khlit, lord," said Chagan slowly, "I smelled the trap in the camp on the steppe. Likewise, when I bridled the horses, I heard the two Chubil Khans speaking together within a tent close by. They planned to set out in the night for the Thian Shan, to bear word of your departure to the Kashgar lamasery."

"And still you came with me? Nay, you are one without brains."

"I came, lord," Chagan straightened with rough dignity, "to bring the horses, that we might arrive here before the men of the Tsong Khapa expect us. Thus you might see the jaws of the trap before it was ready. Now you can ride back to the Thian Shan safely. There is no time to be lost. And there is nothing here that can fulfil the Dalai Lama's promise. Hasten; there is no time to be lost."

Khlit's mustache twitched in a hard smile.

"It is true that you are a fool, Chagan. Where am I to go? Back to the Jun-gar? Matters would be no better. And where else? Here we stay, Chagan, you and I, until we see what manner of thing the Yellow Hats have prepared for us."

Chagan swore blackly.

"Death is brewing for us here, lord. We will fare no better than the cursed horse that walked into the Jallat Kum."

"I will stay," repeated Khlit. "But you can choose a horse and go."

Something like fear flashed into the stolid face of the sword-bearer.

"Nay, lord," he cried anxiously. "I have ridden at your horse's tail in battle and hunt. I have eaten meat and salt with you. I have slept beside you and gained honor thereby. We two are one."

"So be it, then," said Khlit, turning away.

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Chagan left him to his thoughts and sought out the horses. These he looked over carefully, picketing them so they would not wander on the quicksand and cutting some foliage for fodder. He then inspected their horn horseshoes and made sure that the saddles had not suffered from the hard riding of the last six days. He gave them a little water from the goatskin and departed in search of a possible spring in the ruins. For the stagnant pool in the river-bed was well out on the quicksand beyond reach.

After a moment of this, Chagan paused and scratched his head. He had come upon a series of tracks in the sand, made by horses shod differently from his own. He followed out the winding trails and presently compared the marks with those of Azim's mount. They were the same.

It occurred to Chagan that the shepherd might have returned in the night. But the other had professed to be afraid of the ruins after sundown. Further inspection convinced the Tatar that the tracks were a day or two old. Azim, then, had been here before, not once but frequently in spite of his talk of evil spirits.

Tracing out the course of the tracks, Chagan found that they led to the mound of sand which rose at the end of the Tarim basin behind the place where the river had once sunk into the earth. This mound, Chagan noted, was different in shape from most of the sand-dunes. It was round instead of wave-shape, and it was a good sixty feet in height. Buttresses of stone projected through the sand at points.

Chagan made the half-circle of the place. Abruptly he halted, and his jaw dropped. The sound of singing came to his ears, faint but distinct. To his fancy, it was a woman's voice. And it seemed to issue from the mound of sand.

VI

THE hair had not descended to its normal position on the back of Chagan's head when Khlit joined him. The Cossack had heard the voice. The two men gazed at the mound curiously.

"Said I not the place was rife with evil spirits?" growled the sword-bearer. "That is the song I heard in the night."

The voice dwindled and was silent. Khlit inspected the stone ruins which showed through the sand. Then he motioned to Chagan.

"Here is no sand-dune," he growled. "The sand has covered up a building, and one of size. Some parts of the walls show through the sand. If we look we will find a woman in the ruins."

"Nay, then she must eat rock and drink from the Jallat Kum," protested the Tatar. "If there was a house here, even a palace, the sand has filled it up——"

Nevertheless he followed Khlit as the Cossack climbed over the débris of rock that littered the sides of the mound. They went as far as they could, stopping at the edge of the basin which the mound adjoined. There was no sign of a person among the remnants of walls. But Khlit pointed to the tower on the summit of the mound.

Chagan objected that there were no footsteps to be seen leading to the ruined tower. Khlit, however, solved this difficulty by scrambling up the slope. The shifting sand, dislodged by his progress, fell into place again behind him, erasing all mark of his footsteps. He vanished into the pile of masonry. Presently he reappeared and directed Chagan to bind together a torch of dead tamarisk branches and to light it at their fire.

When the sword-bearer had done this, Khlit assisted him to the summit of the hillock. There he pointed to the stone tower. Its walls had crumbled into piles of stones, projecting from the sand no more than the height of a man, but in the center of the walls a black opening led downward.

Steps were visible through the aperture. Khlit took the torch and descended into the opening, followed by Chagan. The stairs had originally led to the tower summit, for they curved downward along the walls. As they climbed down, sand sifted in from occasional embrasures in the walls. Chagan guessed that they had descended to about the level of the desert plain without when the steps terminated in a pile of sand.

Throwing the light of the torch around them, Khlit saw that they were in a square chamber somewhat larger than the diameter of the tower. At one side a door showed, dark in the flickering light from the burning branches.

Through this doorway Khlit went, stooping under the lintel, for the sand had piled

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itself a foot or so on what must have been the flooring of the building. As they stood up in the chamber beyond the door, both halted in surprize.

A candle lighted the place—a small room with stone walls, the floor cleared of sand and carpeted with rugs. Some Turkish cushions were piled in one corner, and on the cushions a girl was seated. She was unveiled and the candle glinted on her startled face, delicate and olive-hued.

She was dressed in a dainty, fur-tipped *khalat* and baggy trousers of nankeen. She had the very slender figure of a dancer, with the customary veil penning her black hair behind turquoise ear-rings. What held the eyes of the two men was her face, fair for middle Asia, small-mouthed and proud. Not since he had left Persia had Khlit seen a woman of such loveliness; moreover, the girl stirred his interest, for she had the garb and henna-hued countenance of a dancer—yet there was authority in the erect carriage of her small head and in her quick movements.

Chagan sniffed at the elusive scent that filled the room, a faint odor of dried rose leaves tinged with musk.

"By the winged horse of Kaidu!" he swore. "If this be truly a woman and not a spirit, it is no wonder that Azim's horse left tracks around this place."

The girl frowned at his words, as if trying to grasp their meaning. She rose quickly to her feet with the gliding motion of the trained dancer. Her breath rose and fell tumultuously under the *khalat* with her startled breathing. Her brown eyes were wide and alert. Still the look she cast them was not so much fear as curiosity. Khilt, seeing that she did not understand the Tatar of Chagan, spoke to her in Uigur.

"How came you here, little sparrow?" he asked gruffly. "And what is this place?"

She held out her hand appealingly.

"Have you water, Khan? I have had no water for a day and a night, nor food."

For the first time Khlit noted that her olive cheeks were pinched and there were dark circles in the paint under her eyes. He took the flask of watered kumiss from the sword-bearer's belt and gave it to her. She caught it to her lips eagerly; then, remembering, she drank a swallow slowly, repeating the name of Allah after the fashion of Islam.

"The gully jackal who bears the name of Azim has not come, as he is wont, to bring me water and rice for the last day," she said angrily. "For that I will pull many hairs from his beard when he comes."

Khlit scanned her idly. He had little liking for women who were soft and quarrelsome. Yet this one spoke as if she was accustomed to give orders. By her speech he guessed her from the region of Samarkand.

"How can Azim pay such a handsome harlot?" Chagan growled, for his mind admitted of but one idea at a time.

The girl caught something of his meaning. Her slender hands clenched, and she stepped close to Khlit until her perfumed veil touched his mustache.

"What says the one without breeding? Eh, have I the manner of a slave? Azim is a dog who does my bidding. Since I came here, escaped from a caravan upon a camel, he has tended to my wants, thinking to sell me for a good price."

Khlit motioned around the chamber.

"Why did you come here?"

She scrutinized him, head on one side, with the bright curiosity of a bird.

"My name is Sheillil," she made answer, "and I am the dancer of Samarkand. There is a fat merchant of Kashgar who thought that he had bought me for five times a hundred gold shekels. Nay, men are fools. I left the caravan during a sandstorm and came where I knew none would follow. The camel stepped upon the Jallat Kum and is not. But Azim came and showed me this place."

Khlit said a word to Chagan, who left the tower and presently returned, grumbling, with a handful of meat he had warmed at the fire and dried milk curds. These the Cossack gave to the girl, for he saw that she was weak with hunger. When she had finished, he took up the candle, which was a large one and of good yellow wax. Sheillil took his hand and led him through a further door, into what seemed a hall of considerable size.

"Azim has fewer wits than a camel," she commented, "but he has heard the tale of this place from his father, who heard it from his father. It is a place of strange gods. Look!"

She pointed to the walls of the chamber. Khlit saw carved wooden columns with faded paintings on the walls between them. A balcony ran around the chamber, and

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there was a dais of jade at one end, as if the statue of a god had been removed from it. He saw why the place had not been filled by the sand which had risen over its roof.

Evidently the structure had been a temple, built to endure. For the walls were massive blocks of stone, and the embrasures were small. Under each opening was a waist-high pile of sand which had filtered through. A coating of sand covered the floor. Several carved ebony benches stood by the walls in a litter of rugs, bronze candlesticks and candles of the kind that Sheillil had appropriated.

"It is the temple of Talas," whispered the girl, a little awed by the gloom of the empty chamber. "When the sands drove the people from Talas, the other houses crumbled, but this was strongly made, being the home of a god, and it stood. For a while men came to plunder, and many of them were lost in the Jallat Kum. Now it is forgotten. There are other rooms. But the god has been taken away."

Abruptly she ceased speaking. Khlit and Chagan whirled involuntarily. The silence of the temple was disturbed by a muttering sound. It stole in through the stone walls, echoing in the vaulted space. It was a sound that stirred their blood, vast, grumbling with a thunder-like note.

Sheillil looked from one to the other, her eyes mischievously alight.

"Eh, that is a rare music," pointing to the tower entrance; "it is the voice of the Jallat Kum when the sands are moving. Azim calls it the singing sand."

She touched Khlit lightly on the arm.

"Send your man up the tower. I would speak with you."

VII

SHEILLIL disposed herself comfortably on the cushions in the ante-chamber of the temple, with a catlike daintiness. Leaning on one slim arm, her eyes sought the Cossack's from under long lashes. He was conscious of the delicate perfume that came from the dancer's garments, of the scent of rose and aloes in her hair. He seated himself cross-legged on the stones, a little distance from her.

"I wonder," she began slowly, "how many daughters of khans have come to this temple, leaving their slippers outside, and prayed with rich offerings before the god who is no longer here? Yet behold, I am here, a woman of Islam, and you a *caphar*."

Khlit returned her gaze indifferently. He had seen many women and all were fond of talking. Sheillil puzzled him slightly, for she went unveiled and seemed without fear. He judged that she had been much with men, bought and sold in many bazaars. Still she could not be more than seventeen.

"It is written," she pursued, "that with Allah are the keys of the unseen. Can you read the future, Khlit, Khan——"

"The devil!" Khlit stared at her. "How knew you my name?"

Sheillil propped her chin on her two hands and smiled.

"I know many things, Khlit, Khan. Messages travel quickly across the steppe to the mountains where my home was. Nay, you wear the curved saber of Kaidu. Once you were in Samarkand. I have been there also, and men talk freely to me, for I am lovely as the dawn in the hill gardens of Kabul. Their blood is warmed as with wine when they look at me."

The Cossack felt that the girl was trying to catch his glance. He lit his pipe and smoked silently.

"In Kashgar," continued Sheillil, disappointed, "I heard it said that the horsemen of the Khirghiz were at war with the Tatars of the Jun-gar. Is that the truth?"

"The Khirghiz bands invaded our boundaries. They will come again with Summer. Why do you ask, little sparrow?"

"Because I would know, fool!" Sheillil's delicate brows met in a frown. "There is much talk in Kashgar among the clergy of the Yellow Hat and their followers, the Usbeks. They say the strength of the Jun-gar is gone, and that their lands will be spoil for the first comer before the next snow."

"In the cities," Khlit responded calmly, "men say what it pleases them to hear."

"Then it is true?" Sheillil waited for a response and, receiving none, rattled the bracelets on her round arms angrily. "The Khirghiz clans will take what land they need. I know, for I was born among them. My father was a khan. You are truly one without wit. I had the thought that the owner of the sword of Kaidu would be a wise man. Why are you not with the Jun-gar?"

Khlit's gray eyes peered at the girl from

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under shaggy brows, and her lips parted at the somber fire she beheld there.

"It was the word of the Dalai Lama that I could find aid here for the Jun-gar," he said. "So I have come to learn the meaning of the message. Truly it is a strange place——"

Sheillil threw back her dark head with a peal of shrill laughter. She lay back on the cushions and laughed, rocking her slender form in joyous mirth. Khlit regarded her impassively.

"A wise khan," she cried, "a true shepherd of his flock! Nay, tell me. What aid do you find here? A ruined city and a flea-ridden Azim. What think you now of the word of the Tsong Khapa?"

"I think," responded Khlit slowly, "that I may hear from the Dalai Lama at this spot."

Sheillil sat up, wiping the tears from her eyes.

"Truly," she responded, "you are a man of the steppe. It is not the way of the hillmen to wait for what is to come. Life is too short for that, and Allah has favor for the bold in heart."

A step sounded behind them, and Chagan made his appearance.

"Azim is without," he motioned up the steps. "He has come with two men from a passing caravan. One, who is a merchant, says that he may buy the girl Sheillil if she is fair."

The girl tossed her head proudly.

"Am I one to be sold by a shepherd? Nay, tell them to begone."

Khlit left the dancer in the chamber to ascend the tower with Chagan. He found the Dungan shepherd with two others, mounted and of important bearing. They had met Azim, they said, at the near-by watering-place on the caravan track, and the man had said he had a Uigur girl of beauty for sale.

Azim disappeared into the tower steps and presently returned, cursing and hauling at the girl, who was resisting vigorously. Sheillil had drawn her veil across her face, and, as they stumbled down the sand slope, she tore herself free from Azim and ran to Khlit.

"I am the daughter of a khan," she panted, "and women of my blood may not be bought and sold. Such is the law. Slay this scoundrel for me and bid the others go."

"Nay—it is not my affair," said Khlit shortly.

The merchants had reined their horses up to the girl, and, as she spoke, Azim seized her again, tearing the veil from her face. To Khlit's surprize she flushed crimson with shame and turned from the strangers. Chagan grinned at the sight. One of the merchants, a stout Dungan, leaned down and tried to draw the *khalat* from the shoulders of the struggling girl.

Sheillil, who was weeping with rage, twisted in Azim's grasp. Suddenly she freed one arm and snatched at the sword that hung from Chagan's belt. So quickly had she acted that the Tatar had no chance to prevent her. The weapon was a heavy one, made for Chagan's great strength, and the girl could barely lift it. At sight of the gleaming blade, however, Azim jumped nimbly back.

"Dolt!" cried Sheillil furiously. "Dirt, of a jackal's begetting! Am I one to be sold by your breed?"

"She is not ugly," said the Dungan merchant with a grin. "We will take her."

At a sign from Khlit, Chagan stepped forward and deftly took the sword from the unsuspecting girl. The Cossack eyed Sheillil doubtfully and caught the reproachful glance she threw at Chagan. A dancing woman of the bazaars she might be, but she had the manner of a girl of noble blood. It was no business of his whether Azim disposed of her to the merchants.

"She is worth much," put in Azim craftily. "And she can dance."

The girl faced the merchants proudly, her slender figure tense and her cheeks flushed. Khlit stepped forward between her and the others.

"Nay," he said gruffly. "She is not a slave. She comes from the hills, and she has the blood of a khan." He wheeled on Azim. "Are you her master?"

The shepherd muttered that he was free to do with the girl as he chose. The merchants glanced at each other. Sheillil was a beauty and would fetch a high price at one of the city bazaars. She was worth taking.

"Azim," said Khlit grimly, "when you have fought a battle and taken captives it will be time to speak of slaves. This woman has sought refuge here. She is not to be sold——"

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"The caravan is moving on," broke in the Dungan merchant. "We have no time to haggle. The three of you can divide the money. Here; we can not wait——"

He fumbled in the money bag at his belt. The other merchant moved nearer to the girl, who stood close beside Chagan, watching all that went on eagerly. At a signal from the Dungan, the man spurred his horse forward, hoping to ride down the Tatar.

Chagan, however, was not to be caught unawares. The merchant had whipped out his sword, and, as Chagan sprang aside, he slashed at him. The sword-bearer warded the blow easily. The return sweep of his weapon caught the rider in the side. The man swayed and slid from his saddle to the sand.

The Tatar turned toward the Dungan. But the latter, with a startled glance at his fallen companion, wheeled his horse away. He hesitated for a moment, then he rode through the dunes in the direction he had come. The girl clapped her hands in delight.

"That was a good blow," she cried. "See, the man is cut half-way through!"

A glance told Chagan that she spoke the truth. Picking up the dying man by the belt the sword-bearer lugged him around the mound to the slope of the Jallat Kum. Khlit, who had followed, saw the Tatar toss the body down the slope. It rolled upon the damp sands, and in a moment was gone.

"Evil comes of such women, lord," muttered Chagan with a shake of the head. "Harken. You have said that the Tsong Khapa has laid a trap for us. The trap is rarely baited. How else comes the dancing girl here? She is no common slave escaped from a caravan."

Khlit made no response to this. He returned to the spot where they had left Azim, intending to question the shepherd. But Azim had vanished.

VIII

LATE that afternoon Khlit sat with Sheillil on the summit of the temple mound, from which he had a good view of the ruins of Talas. The girl was humming softly to herself, cross-legged in the sand. Khlit, engrossed in his own thoughts, paid little attention to her.

Azim had not reappeared, and Chagan, making a cast into the desert, had learned that the caravan had gone on its way. The silence of the ruins irked Khlit, who had little liking for cities, living or dead. So far there had been no signs of envoys of the Dalai Lama. But Khlit reasoned shrewdly that they would seek him out, once they were aware that he had arrived. What did they want with him? What were the plans of the Tsong Khapa?

Khlit did not bother himself about what would happen at Talas. It was his policy when dealing with enemies more powerful than himself to enter their ranks, whatever the danger might be. A single man, he reasoned, was useless fighting against an overpowering force. But in the stronghold of his enemies that man might accomplish much. To learn the plans of his foe and to defeat them from within by a stroke of the coldest daring was possible only to one of Khlit's craft, and in a country where an alliance of tribes might be broken up in a night, or two chieftains come to blows over a word.

But in following his usual scheme of attack, Khlit now faced two considerable obstacles. He could not count on the aid of his own followers, who were under the influence for the time being of the Dalai Lama and were held at home by the fear of the coming Khirghiz invasion. And in pitting his strength against the master of Lhassa, Khlit knew that he was meeting a foeman of extraordinary keenness, whose intentions were a secret to him.

It was a desperate venture. Khlit had only two advantages in his lone struggle for the life of the Jun-gar. The clergy of Tibet, informed by Dongkor Gelong, would doubtless underestimate his own ability, as other enemies had done to their cost, aided by his simulation of blunt thickheadedness. And he was dealing with two enemies instead of one.

He glanced carelessly at the girl, who crooned to herself well-pleased with the event of the morning. Who was she? What was her mission in Talas? What master did she serve?

Sheillil yawned prettily and stretched herself.

"You are not good company, Khan," she said idly. "Go below with the big Tatar and sleep. I will watch if any come."

Khlit presently followed her advice.

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He found Chagan snoring on his back on the rugs of the anteroom. The Cossack had not intended to sleep, but he found that his head dropped on his shoulders. He had slept but a few hours of the last week, and the girl's singing soothed him. His mind drifted away, and Chagan's snores dwindled to silence.

He woke almost at once. Sheillil's song had stopped. He heard muffled voices, and presently a step sounded on the stairs. Khlit became wide-awake on the instant. There was not one step but several. He had only time to kick Chagan to consciousness when the light from the narrow doorway was blotted out.

Sheillil entered, and after her came a half-dozen men in a motley dress ranging from the sheepskin coat of the plainsman to the black hat and long robe of a Dungan spearman. The group parted, and a man wearing a familiar garb of orange and black stepped forward. It was one of the Chubil Khans who had attended Dongkor Gelong.

"See, O man of the Yellow Hat," cried Sheillil gleefully, "here be the two Tatars who came here yesterday taken drowsing like sheep in an *aul*. Take heed of the broad-shouldered one. He wields a sword like one possessed of Erlik."

Chagan, who had sprung to his feet, clutched at his weapon. But Khlit motioned him back. The tower without was filled with armed men. The Chubil Khan had come well escorted. Still, men seldom traveled alone in those days of ever-present danger.

"What seek you with me?" Khlit asked bluffly.

Sheillil made a deep and mocking salaam, hands outstretched over her dark head, forgetful or heedless of the fact that she had promised to warn the Tatars of the coming of strangers.

"It is a messenger, O Khlit, from one who is wiser than you, to command your attendance——"

"At the Kashgar lamasery, Kha Khan," put in the Chubil Khan, a crafty gleam in his narrow eyes. "The almighty Tsong Khapa, whom Heaven has honored by divine reincarnation, has further tidings for you."

"I will hear them," said Khlit calmly. "But I did not know the Dalai Lama was at Kashgar."

The Chubil Khan spread both arms outward.

"I am but a lesser servant of the Tsong Khapa, Khan Tuvron; the Tsong Khapa is, like the light of the sun, everywhere among his people; yet none but the higher priesthood see his face—never strangers."

There was a bustle in the group of men, and the tattered figure of Azim pushed forward, falling on his knees before Tuvron. He clasped the bandaged feet of the envoy, speaking, to Khlit's surprize, the tongue of the lamas.

"O mighty Chubil Khan, do not forget your servant Azim, who tends the empty shrine of Talas and who sent you word by way of the Dungan caravan of the coming of the Tatars. I ask humbly but a single ray of light from the radiance of the beneficent Tsong Khapa—only a very tiny reward. Give your servant Azim the dancing girl Sheillil, who wandered here, for my comfort and enjoyment. Then, when I am through with her, she can be sold for a good price——"

Tuvron stared at the girl in surprize. Sheillil drew close to him and whispered. The man's expression changed, and he would have spoken. But the girl checked him. She placed her slippered foot on Azim's neck, pressing his head to the floor, and laughed delightedly.

"Your comfort, Azim!" she mocked. "Little comfort would Sheillil of Samarkand be to you. It is in my mind to throw you to the Jallat Kum, but one needs you who has use for even such a low-born thing as you. Pray to your departed god to bring you a mate—from the cattle herd."

With that she turned and ran up the tower steps. When Khlit and Chagan mounted camels and set out in the midst of the Tibetans, Sheillil rode ahead on Tuvron's white camel, which she had chosen for herself, singing to herself as she guided them to the caravan track that led to Kashgar, a two-days' journey to the west.

IX

There are many gods in the world, but no man shall have two gods lest evil come to his household.
Khirghiz saying.

A KNOCK sounded on the heavy door of Chu'n Yuen, armorer of Kashgar. The proprietor rose, took up a lantern, and sought the door, his pot belly shaking under the silken curtain of its costly robe. Chu'n Yuen wore the black

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skull-cap of a Dungan. Otherwise his face and dress were those of a Chinaman, blessed with vast flesh and full years of prosperity.

Chu'n Yuen opened a narrow panel in the door at the height of his eyes and peered out cautiously. Only by consummate shrewdness had the Chinaman, who sold to the mountaineers arms brought from Damascus and Persia by caravan, been able to keep his wrinkled head whole on his plump body. By shrewdness and the fact that as a Dungan he was allied to none of the warring clans of Central Asia.

The armorer scrutinized the person who had knocked, through slant eyes. He had learned to discriminate carefully between the thin, bearded and turbaned face of an Usbek of Kashgar and the hard, round countenance, with the small, black eyes and drooping mustache, of a Khirghiz hillman. For the Usbek was keen to cheat him of his wares, while the Khirghiz would pay generously on one occasion and lay waste his shop on another.

But Chu'n Yuen saw the slender form of a veiled woman and opened the barred door readily. His visitor stepped inside with a quick flash of brown eyes around the shop and the curtained door beyond it. Chu'n Yuen barred the door again and set down the lantern with a silent chuckle. If a woman came alone to his shop at night, it could be but for one purpose. Indeed, as if reading his thoughts, she walked with a light, swaying step to the curtains and slipped into the inner chamber where the Chinaman was wont to dispense wine to those who desired.

His visitor quite clearly did not wish wine. She surveyed the greasy benches, the dingy couches and the wine casks with something like contempt. The shop was empty, save for two camel-drivers too drunk to sit upright. Chu'n Yuen stepped forward and inclined his massive shoulders politely.

"Here is a soft nest for those who seek good living," he murmured. "I am a kind master and the hillmen who come here pay well, especially for a dancer who is light on her feet——"

"For a woman who has danced in the palaces of Samarkand before the sultans?" The girl's voice sounded musically with a hint of laughter. "Nay, this does not look like a palace and you, Chu'n Yuen, have the face of one whose soul is rolled in fat."

The brown eyes flashed at the owner of the shop quizzically, and Chu'n Yuen drew his breath quickly, for he was not used to mockery from a woman.

"If you can dance, Strumpet-tongue, I will see that the great Khirghiz chieftains come to see it—although when they were last here they carried off my Turkish pistols without a silver coin in payment."

He grasped her hand, and made as if to pull off the veil. The girl slipped away deftly.

"Ho, you will need taming, I see. But you will not leave as easily as you entered yonder door."

His visitor seemed not to be listening.

"The Khirghiz are here—Iskander Khan and Bassanghor Khan? Are many Khirghiz with them? Or Kallmarks?"

"They came with a small following—a hundred hillmen. There are to be horse-races and games, by request of the lamas, I have heard," said the Chinaman in surprize. "Still, that is no concern for your pretty head. Perhaps you want me to pay you silver, as a sign of good faith. If I could see your face——"

Again the girl avoided his clutch at the veil. Chu'en Yuen's pig eyes narrowed ominously. It had been in his mind to deal gently with the mysterious woman who came unmasked to his shop. Her figure suggested beauty, which was more than the women had who were brought here by Khirghiz or Tibetan raiding parties to be inmates of the vendor's shop. But if she flouted him, Chu'n Yuen was prepared to whip her into submission, for she would mean many shekels for him.

"Fool," said the girl mockingly, "and half-caste thief of a race without honor! What will the mollahs of Islam say when they hear that you traffic in wine! Have you forgotten the Koran?"

In spite of himself Chu'n Yuen gave back a step and lifted his fat hand as if to ward off a blow.

"There is no word in the Koran against selling wine," he responded sullenly, "and there is no mollah in Kashgar."

"Fool! To sell your honor for the gold of unbelievers. Dirt for each passer-by to spit upon, if he pays! Is there no word in the Koran against that——"

With a cry half of fear, half of rage, the

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shopkeeper lifted his fist to strike the girl. Quickly she thrust her arm in front of his scowling face. A gold bangle, glittering on her wrist, caught his eye. His hand fell to his side and his jaw dropped.

"A sign of the true faith!" he muttered. "Upon a woman's bracelet. Nay, I have heard—I meant no harm to a follower of Islam. But you came here alone and at night, honorable lady——"

"Oh, it is honorable lady now," she gibed. "How quickly your tongue twists! Nay, remember to treat Sheillil of Samarkand with courtesy. Or there are those who will stick a dagger between your fat ribs, Chu'n Yuen. Now take heed and tell me what I wish to know. Iskander Khan is here?"

Chu'n Yuen stared at the gold bracelet as if fascinated.

"He is here with his followers—whom may Allah curse with a lasting blight—in the caravanserai without the walls. Already there have been brawls between the Khirghiz hillmen and the Usbek people of the town. *Mo fi kalbi hir'allah*—there is nothing save Allah in my heart, honorable lady."

"Then," said Sheillil coolly, "Iskander Khan will rejoice to know there is a wine-bartering Mussulman here who has a goodly store of weapons. This shop will make rare picking for his hillmen, and Iskander Khan, they say, has turned his face more to Lhassa than to Mecca."

"May Allah—" Chu'n Yuen began and choked.

Verily this woman was a fiend incarnate! Sheillil read the blind fear in his quivering, fat face and judged it would not be wise to anger the shopkeeper too greatly, or he might kill her.

"Yet is may be, Chu'n Yuen," she added gravely, "that I shall whisper to Dongkor Gelong, who is head of the lamasery here, that he has a worthy servant, an armorer and a wine-dealer, who is a man of parts and may be relied on in need. Eh, what say you to that? The star of the Dalai Lama is rising in Kashgaria and, as you know, the half-moon of Mecca is low on the horizon."

The Chinaman's eyes flickered shrewdly. The name of Dongkor Gelong was one to conjure with in Kashgar.

"For two days and nights," he whispered, with a glance around the room, "the Yellow Hats, whose ways are baneful as the coming of the star of ill-omen, have been passing into the city gates in numbers. They are not to be seen in the streets, for they have gone to the lamasery. And it is not the custom for Dongkor Gelong the all-powerful to celebrate games."

Sheillil watched the shopkeeper through half-closed eyes, a gaze which he tried to meet and could not.

"Eh, you are clever, O Mandarin," smiled the girl, and Chu'n Yuen held his head higher. "You have the eye of a steppe fox. We shall be friends, you and I. Is Dongkor Gelong in the town?"

"Alas, that can not be known. He goes and comes like a shadow."

"How many of the Yellow Hats are within the walls?"

"Very many. The Chubil Khans are assembling with the higher lamas. Of their followers perhaps a thousand are here—besides the Usbeks who are of their faith. They are waiting for the games, which will be the day after tomorrow."

"Aye, they are waiting," said Sheillil, half to herself. "Harken, Chu'n Yuen, give wine freely to the hillmen when they come. And say nothing to the Yellow Hats concerning my visit. I shall have need of you later—and you will be paid thrice over."

Chu'n Yuen bowed profoundly. Sheillil guessed shrewdly that he would obey the first part of her instructions, but would not still his wagging tongue concerning her. Which was what she wished. She slipped through the curtains and had unbarred the outer door before the Chinaman realized she was gone.

X

IN HIS cell in the lamasery Dongkor Gelong sat beside a plain wooden table. It was a bare room, fitted with pallet, stools and a few books on the table, for, although Dongkor Gelong wore the high hat and ornate robe of a Chutuktu Lama, it was his pride to live simply and unostentatiously as when he was a monk.

A candle on the table cast its glint on the prominent forehead of the Tibetan, under which gleamed dark eyes in a white face—the face of an ascetic and a fanatic. He looked up as the door opened and Tuvron

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Khan entered with a bow. On a sign from his superior the Chubil Khan ushered in Khlit with an attendant of the lamasery and took his stand by the door.

The Cossack declined Dongkor Gelong's courteous offer of a seat and faced the lama across the table. For a long moment the two men studied each other, Dongkor Gelong's long, dark countenance wearing a slight smile, Khlit's lined face impassive.

"I think, O Kha Khan," began the lama slowly, "that I can read your thoughts. You are thinking that you have been tricked—brought here among enemies, because you obeyed the instructions of the Tsong Khapa. Yet it is not so. You see you are an honored guest. You still have your sword, which I have heard is one to be prized above many. And it is not the fault of the master of Lhassa that you are alone. He urged that you bring your followers."

Dongkor Gelong paused as if to hear what the Cossack would answer. But Khlit was silent.

"And you are wondering, perhaps, why the Dalai Lama should send a man of rank like yourself to such a place as Talas. It was no trickery. Nay, it had been our intention to welcome you fittingly at the spot but you traveled with such speed that you were there before us. It was not well to let the news get abroad on the steppe that you had come to Kashgar. So much the Dalai Lama in his wisdom foresaw. And he is ready to make good the words of the oracle."

"The wisdom of the Dalai Lama is beyond my understanding," returned Khlit calmly.

Dongkor Gelong bowed assent, although his eyes swept the Cossack's face keenly.

"It is well-spoken, O Kha Khan. You are not a fool like some of those from the steppe. Harken to the plan of the master of Lhassa. There are enemies you fear, who are planning to invade the lands of the Jun-gar. They are the Khirghiz, who are under the leadership of two khans, Iskander and Bassanghor. Both are formidable men in their way and, being of the hills, are independent of all authority, even that of the Tsong Khapa."

"Aye," said Khlit briefly.

Once again the Chutuktu Lama studied him and nodded as if satisfied.

"Iskander Khan and Bassanghor Khan are here in Kashgar," he went on slowly. "Without those two the Khirghiz are like a body without a head. They are the ones who planned the war against you. And the Tsong Khapa has noted with grief the injuries inflicted on you. We have made, the ones of the Yellow Hat, an opportunity for you to strike at them, swiftly and fatally, and to escape unharmed."

"To kill them?"

"Aye, both. It is for that we have brought you here. Harken, Kha Khan. We have given out the word that there will be games on the Kashgar plain in two days. The matter is easily disposed of. Both khans are reckless, and they are proud of their horsemanship. A dancer, one of the beauties of Samarkand, has come here at our bidding. A favorite game of the Khirghiz is called the Love Chase—a sport where a woman is set loose on a horse among several riders on a plain and falls to the possession of the one who can first secure her. Nay, you can see——"

"Chagan and I," Khlit broke in, "are among the riders. In the confusion of horsemen we could strike down the khans, saying afterward that it was a brawl. That is what you plan. But afterward——"

"The Khirghiz are few. My followers are numerous; they will surround you and Chagan before the Khirghiz understand what has happened, and you will be safe in the lamasery. Also, the Khirghiz have never seen you. They will not look for you here."

Khlit nodded.

"We will be escorted safely back to the Jun-gar boundary?"

Dongkor Gelong smiled and waved his hand amiably.

"Such is the will of the all-wise Tsong Khapa. There are other leaders of the Khirghiz who can be dealt with as they ride back to the Thian Shan passes. The pick of the hill chieftains are here in Kashgar. Unless I am mistaken, few will survive to carry on the war against the Jun-gar. And the Tsong Khapa will give you further aid through the Yellow Hats—when, of course, you show your gratitude for his help by continuing the tribute that the Jun-gar owes to Lhassa."

"And the Khirghiz?"

"The death of their leaders, who are overbearing ruffians without good-will or understanding, will strengthen the tie of the

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Yellow Hats to their lands. I speak bluntly, for I see you like short and truthful phrases."

"Aye, it is ill to lie, among true men," assented Khlit, tugging at his mustache.

Thereupon followed a silence of such length that the attendants of Dongkor Gelong stirred expectantly, watching the Cossack. Khlit's shaggy countenance was inscrutable, until he turned suddenly to Dongkor Gelong and, to their surprize, laughed heartily.

XI

"I HAVE heard your wisdom, Chutuktu Lama," he grinned; "now you must listen to mine. Nay, I am no *shaman* or conjuring monk, but I can read what is hidden. I can tell you what is in your thoughts. Would you like to hear?"

"But you have already agreed to the plan of the Tsong Khapa," frowned Dongkor Gelong.

He studied the tall figure of the Cossack with the cold, blank stare of one who held the lash of fear over a multitude of slaves.

"Aye. That may be," admitted Khlit. "I have no love for the Khirghiz khans. Eh, I shall tell your thoughts. The Tsong Khapa has lost the control of his priests over the Khirghiz. And the Tatars of the Jun-gar do not love to pay tribute, especially as I—an unbeliever—have taught them the folly of doing so. Is it not so?"

"Obedience to the Tsong Khapa will reward you fully," objected the lama.

"Aye. The seed of evil will bear fruit. Am I a fledgling, to be fooled by the mummery of Lhassa?" Khlit's voice sank with a growl.

Dongkor Gelong half-rose in his seat; then he sat back, staring at the Cossack.

"Suppose I slay this Iskander Khan and the other. Then the ill-will between the Jun-gar and the Khirghiz will become a blood-feud. Do, the hillmen ever forget the shedding of blood? Nay; the horde of the Thian Shan, the Kara Khirghiz, the Kazaks and some of the Kallmark clans who are allied to them will ride against the Jun-gar steppe and lay waste our villages. Then the wisdom of the Tsong Khapa will be fulfilled, because his enemies will have weakened each other. His cursed Yellow Hats will pour over the hills and the steppe, gaining lands and power where good men have died in a blood-feud. Is this not the truth?"

Dongkor Gelong had mastered his surprize. He held up his hand calmly, although his dark eyes had narrowed.

"Take heed, Kha Khan. The Tsong Khapa, in agreement with the sacred oracle which declared in the ashes of forthcoming truth that the Jun-gar should find salvation at Talas, has laid before you a plan. Do you decline?"

Khlit's mustache twitched in a smile which held no mirth.

"It may be. What if I do?"

"You speak like one without wits." Dongkor Gelong shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. "Harken, Kha Khan. If you set aside the word of Lhassa, the invisible forces which are at the disposal of the master of the Yellow Hats will claim you. Little you know how strong they are and how weak you are. The Jun-gar know that you came to Talas. It shall be told them how you defied the almighty Tsong Khapa—aye, your very words. And they will hear how your sinful conduct had its reward—for you will fall, by mischance, into the Jallat Kum."

Khlit shrank back as if in horror. The full force of the lama's trickery revealed itself to him. Also the emptiness of the pledge given by his master, the Dalai Lama. He knew that Kashgar was filled with the open and disguised followers of the Yellow Hats. He was powerless to escape from the walled city. He shivered in spite of himself, as he thought of the black sands of the Jallat Kum.

Dongkor Gelong surveyed him with a pallid smile. The Cossack, he thought, was not altogether to be deceived. But he had been taught a lesson.

"And Iskander Khan?" Khlit asked hoarsely.

"We will deal with him in another way. The girl Sheillil is fair, and she has been well-paid to serve the Dalai Lama. Iskander Khan will be a slave to her beauty."

Khlit stretched out his hand and saw that it was shivering. His thoughts would not tear themselves from the Jallat Kum. He recalled the unfortunate horse that had blundered into the sands. . . .

"Nay," he complained, "if I slay Iskander Khan, even if I live, there will be a war to the death between his people and mine.

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Now we may still make peace. It is not too late."

Dongkor Gelong's face hardened.

"You have your choice. The will of the Tsong Khapa must be carried out. I am but one of his many servants. And do not think to draw your sword in the lamasery. Even now there are two men within arm's-reach of your tall body. A move—and you go to the Jallat Kum. Azim has thrown many into the sands."

The sweat came to Khlit's forehead. Truly, it was asking greatly of him to face such a death for the Tatars, who, after all, were not of his faith. And, if he did die as Dongkor Gelong threatened, how would the Jun-gar be guarded against further stratagems of the Tsong Khapa?

"Not the Jallat Kum!" he cried and moistened his lips, finding them dry.

"That—or the death of the khans. Choose."

Then it was that the lama saw what brought the light of satisfaction to his eyes and a hidden sneer to his lips. He saw the lined face of the Cossack quiver as with dread and heard the harsh voice plead brokenly for mercy. Khlit's shoulders bowed, and he clutched the table for support. His eyes wavered about the room, wide with fear. Then he straightened with an effort at control.

"Nay, I am the Kha Khan of the Jun-gar. The strength of my people is in me. Am I to die like that, at price of the life of Iskander Khan? Nay, let the Khirghiz die. I will slay him, and Chagan the other, as you have planned."

Dongkor Gelong rose.

"Think not to fool us. You will be watched by those who have no mercy. You have chosen."

"Aye," mumbled Khlit. "I will take my place in the games. But you must have your followers at the place. And the doors of the lamasery must be open for me when I return, for I will ride here at once."

"It is well," agreed Dongkor Gelong.

At a sign from him the attendants led Khlit from the room. He walked slowly, as one who had been broken in spirit.

The eyes of the lama followed him from the chamber. Dongkor Gelong frowned, as if not altogether content with himself. Presently he took a small sandalwood box from the bosom of his gown.

Holding the box well above the table, the lama opened it suddenly. A flood of black wood ashes fell softly to the table. With ill-concealed eagerness the man held the candle close to the ashes. With his finger he tried to trace out diagrams in the black piles. His frown deepened.

When Tuvron returned at a late hour that night the Chutuktu Lama was still musing over the ashes.

XII

IT WAS the twelfth night of the fifth moon, as related by Batur Madi, *gylong*, that the tribes assembled in the courtyard of the lamasery at Kashgar. The moon shed its cold light on the summits of the hills overlooking the town, leaving the valley and the river in dense shadow. A deeper shadow revealed the mass of the lamasery, erected against the wall of the town.

Inhospitable it was, this monastery, with its massive walls of sandstone, its narrow gates and small embrasures. And it was symbolic in its gloomy secretiveness of the priests it housed. Tonight, however, the courtyard was bright. Lanterns hung from the sides of the wide court, and torch-bearers came and went. From the narrow street outside the place a throng of turbaned and cloaked figures elbowed each other with curses in many tongues for entrance at the gate guarded by armed Tibetans.

Dongkor Gelong had so far departed from the custom of the monastery as to invite the guests from the hills to witness dancing. It was the law that no woman should enter the doors of the monastery itself, so the visitors were not surprized that the festival was held in the court, or that the lamas themselves did not put in appearance. For rumor had it that one of the dancers of Samarkand, a girl from the sultan's courts, would share in the dance.

These tidings stirred the expectation of the restless Khirghiz. Before the first sound of drums was heard in the street, the hillmen were crowding into the court. With them came richly-dressed Jewish merchants of Bokhara, turbaned Usbeks of the town, tousled Dungan camel-drivers and Chinese travelers of the caravans. Among the throng, squatted in rows in the dirt or

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leaning against the walls, the hillmen made a small minority. Yet, as was their custom, they chose the best places, pushing Usbeks and Tibetans aside, reckless of clutched daggers and black looks.

Khlit and Chagan had selected a place against the monastery wall where they could see without being conspicuous. Apparently they were free to move where they wished, but they suspected that a watch was kept on them from the windows of the lamasery and that any attempt to push through the crowd to the courtyard gate would be prevented.

A space had been cleared in the center of the court, and here there were musicians with drums, tambourines and guitars. Some boy dancers of the Usbeks stepped into the open space and began their lively posturing, watched attentively by the throng. Khlit, after a brief glance, paid no further heed to these, knowing that the purpose of Dongkor Gelong was to show Sheillil to the visiting khans, that they could judge of her beauty before the events of the morrow.

Khlit's keen gaze swept the crowd, seeking for the two khans of the Khirghiz. He turned carelessly to a mild-looking *hafiz*—a reader of poems—in a threadbare *khalat*.

"I have heard," he said idly, lest the other suspect his interest, "that two khans from the hills, Iskander and Bassanghor, are here. Do you know the two, man of wisdom?"

The *hafiz* inclined his head and pointed to the farther side of the cleared space. Khlit made out two men who knelt in the first row of spectators. Their dark faces, lean and hawk-like, were fixed indifferently on the dancers; apparently they were waiting impatiently for the appearance of the girl. The Cossack noted that they were richly dressed, even for wealthy chieftains, in leather breeches, velvet outer robes embroidered with gold and jewels. Their sheepskin hoods were clasped at the throat with silver plates.

"The one with the scar is Iskander," declared the *hafiz*, pointing. "Allah grant that he and his riders take not to plundering. Truly, he is a man without faith, serving this god or that as he chooses, but chiefly himself."

"He looks like one who is more at ease in the hills than in a town. What does he here?"

The scholar turned his eyes to the moonlit heavens.

"Allah knows what is before and behind such as he. Nay, I have heard the lamas sent for him."

This agreed with what Khlit had learned from Dongkor Gelong, and he was silent. He saw a flash of eagerness on the face of Iskander Khan. At the same instant a murmur went through the crowd. Those who were in the rear pushed and elbowed for a better view as several figures advanced from the courtyard gate to the cleared space.

"Here is the harlot of the desert," growled Chagan.

Sheillil, cloaked and escorted by two sturdy Tibetans with drawn scimiters, stepped out beside the musicians. She had pushed her veil boldly back, and a sigh went through the crowd at sight of her loveliness. Iskander Khan sat back on his heels with an exclamation of satisfaction.

The muttering and cursing of the throng was silenced as the girl slipped forward into the enclosure, dropping her heavy cloak. The torchlight glinted on her long, dark hair and on the red veil which floated behind it. The satin trousers and tiny, jeweled slippers gleamed in a double light, for the moon was now shining into the courtyard over the dark towers of the lamasery.

Khlit had seen many women dancers of the bazaars, and he paid little heed to Sheillil at first. He was surprized to hear the music change from its shrill whimper to a low monotone of drums, threaded by the soft note of the flutes. Then he saw the *hafiz* standing motionless, pushing against the man in front of him.

"Look, lord," grunted Chagan. "Here is no woman, but a spirit."

Sheillil had grasped her floating veil in both hands. The drapery billowed about her as she moved softly, whirling the veil close to her or holding it wide as her slim form bent and swayed. Her hair tumbled around her shoulders. the moonlight gleamed whitely on bare throat and dainty feet.

This was no dance of the bazaars. It was freer in movement, more subtle in its intoxication. Khlit saw that the hillmen were bending forward, scarcely breathing as they watched.

The plaintive note of the flutes grew

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louder as the veil leaped and tossed about the girl's form. Her eyes were wide and calm, fixed on the sky. Her smile had become fainter, almost wistful.

Then a hoarse mutter of approval ran through the watchers. Two daggers appeared in Sheillil's hands. As she swayed, the twin blades glittered up and down her breast and about her head. Darting swiftly from man to man, Sheillil poised like a bird in flight. Before one she thrust the daggers, laughing as the man drew back, startled. To another she offered her lips swiftly—then slipped away with a glint of a dagger before the bearded face that leaned toward her.

Abruptly she whirled before Iskander Khan. The Khirghiz did not flinch at the knife that passed around his head. His slant eyes, half-closed, were fixed hungrily on the dancer, and his dark face was flushed. As she darted away, he tore the jeweled clasp from his throat and tossed it after her.

As quickly as the dance had begun, it was ended. Sheillil had disappeared among the Tibetan attendants and donned her cloak. The kneeling hillmen rose to their feet clamorously. But the drawn swords of the guards held them back. The dancer turned to make her way through the crowd.

"It is strange," murmured the *hafiz*, half to himself. "That was not like a dance of a sultan's woman. I have not seen the like in the towns. Yet it stirred the hillmen to the *hazzi shaitan*—the passion-spot in the heart. See; she is coming here!"

He stepped back as the girl tripped by, followed by her guards. She paused before Khlit mockingly.

"Here is a graybeard of the steppe!" she cried shrilly. "I like not such as he. Where is your felt tent and mangy pony? By Allah, the man has no wit to his tongue!"

"He has no words for a harlot," growled Chagan, on whom the events of the morrow weighed heavily and who had no fondness for the dancer whom he held responsible for their evil plight.

Sheillil did not understand or notice the speech. She touched Khlit's sword and peered into his face laughingly.

"Eh, it is a clown. Harken, Graybeard, if you will ride in the *kök bura* tomorrow, take care to sharpen that curved sword you wear. Many younger men will ride with me tomorrow. If you would guard your life, have the curved sword sharpened by Chu'n Yuen, the armorer of Kashgar. Aye, Chu'n Yuen will quicken your blood with wine in the morning."

She smiled in the Cossack's face, so close that he caught the subtle scent of roses that came from her garments.

"And will tell you of the Jun-gar," she added so softly that even Chagan, who was beside them, did not hear.

With that she was gone in the crowd.

The *hafiz* looked after her with a sigh.

"There will be good sport at the *kök bura*," he murmured. "Chu'n Yuen, who hears the whispers of Kashgar, swears that the girl Sheillil was born in the hills, where she learned to ride like a goshawk upon the wind. It will take a shrewd horseman to catch her and hold her. Allah the generous has ordained that I should be too poor to buy a horse. Yet it is well, for I have a thought there will be shedding of blood. The woman is fair-faced and shapely."

"Aye, there will be blood, *hafiz*," growled Chagan.

Khlit made no answer. In his mind was running the phrase the girl had whispered. "And will tell you of the Jun-gar." What did Chu'n Yuen, or Sheillil, know of the Tatars? Had she news? Again he asked himself the question that had perplexed him since the day at Talas.

Who was Sheillil? What was her part in the web of intrigue woven by the lamas at Kashgar? Dongkor Gelong had said that he had bought her. If not the lama, what master did she serve?

XIII

Is there aught that goes faster than a loose-reined horse on the plains? Or a well-sped arrow from the bow? Aye; it is the dark hand of death.

Tatar proverb.

KHLIT had discovered that, so long as he kept to himself and in view of the attendants of the monastery, he was free to go where he chose. He had not seen Dongkor Gelong or Tuvron again. On the morning after Sheillil's dance Chagan slept late. Khlit, however, had little rest, and he was glad to leave the gloomy pile of the lamasery, with its robed attendants, for the courtyard.

He had learned that Chu'n Yuen's shop lay in an alley on one of the streets opening into the neighborhood of the monastery.

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He decided to venture there, for he was curious to learn what Sheillil had meant by her whispered speech.

Sauntering across the courtyard, he approached the guards at the gate. The spearmen glanced at him keenly, but offered no opposition when he walked through the gate into the street without. He saw, however, that two men—a Tibetan soldier and a Chubil Khan—who were loitering in the arena walked after him.

Khlit made no haste. He was aware that it would be useless to attempt to escape from his new guardians. Kashgar was walled and guarded. The men of the Yellow Hat in various garb were scattered through the streets. Should a cry be raised after him, he could not go far without being cornered.

He turned down the alley where he knew the armorer's shop was located. The heavy door of Chu'n Yuen stood open. Chu'n Yuen himself was ordering his slaves about shrilly as they served wine to the drunken Khirghiz who lay thick on the floor of the room and the outer shop. At sight of the Cossack, the proprietor halted and approached him respectfully.

"How can I serve you, noble sir?" Chu'n Yuen murmured. "Would the honorable khan, who condescends to dignify my shop with his presence, desire to see some rare scimitars newly brought from Damascus? Or to have his own blade sharpened to an edge that will sever a floating feather?"

Khlit's sidelong glance told him that the Tibetan soldier had followed him into the outer room. The Chubil Khan, being reluctant to enter a wine-shop, had remained in the street, he guessed. He drew his curved saber and balanced the blade in one hand. Chu'n Yuen stared at the rich chasing of the steel and the delicately wrought inscription with professional interest.

"Nay, am I a drunken fool like such—" Khlit kicked one of the insensible forms on the floor contemptuously—"to give up my sword to another? Fetch me a steel, and I will temper the edge to suit myself."

Chu'n Yuen bowed politely.

"It shall be as you wish, noble sir. In the room within a good couch and a cup of wine await you. If you will follow——"

He disappeared through the hangings. Khlit strode after without hesitation, but keeping the weapon poised in his hand. The Chinaman passed through the wine-shop, heavy with the stench of tobacco and stale wine, to the women's court in the rear of his establishment. Here a few female slaves were stretched out asleep on benches.

Chu'n Yuen opened a small door and led his visitor through the courtyard wall. Khlit saw that they were in a walled garden, shaded by poplars under which rugs were placed. It was empty except for themselves and the Tibetan, who had followed closely and was now squatted by the gate.

Khlit seated himself on a rug that the shopkeeper arranged for him, his back to a tree-trunk. He liked the aspect of the place little, or that of Chu'n Yuen, who bustled back into the shop with a glance at the Tibetan. The latter was in the shadow of the wall, apparently drowsing. Khlit wondered if it had been Sheillil's wish that he should give up his weapon. One place was as good as another, however, to the Cossack who was carefully watched by the men of the Yellow Hat.

Chu'n Yuen did not return. Presently the gate opened, and a figure that Khlit recognized immediately as Sheillil entered. The Cossack had half-expected to see the girl, and he did not look up a second time as the dancer knelt beside him and offered him a bowl of wine, laying at the same time a whet-stone at his knees.

Sheillil was veiled. She had changed her dancing costume for a fur-tipped *khalat*, boots and a sheepskin hood. In the shadow of the hood her dark eyes peered up at the Cossack. Khlit had taken up the whet-stone and was gently stroking the blade of the weapon across his knees.

"Have you news of the Jun-gar?" he asked finally, without looking up.

"Nay; how should I know aught of the Tatars?" the girl laughed softly, pleased at the involuntary disappointment she saw in the old chieftain's face.

Khlit did not speak again, which irked her.

"Do you put faith in the word of a woman?" she mocked, watching him brightly. "Or have you come to ask aid of a slave dancer, hired to the wiles of the Tsong Khapa and his crafty servant, Dongkor Gelong? Truly, the men of the Yellow Hats have stripped your strength

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from you, O Kha Khan, and hold you prisoner like a trussed boar. I have heard how you pleaded for mercy from Dongkor Gelong—you have not lost your voice."

The veins stood out on Khlit's forehead, and the hand holding the sword trembled. Seeing this, Sheillil smiled, well-pleased.

"The Tsong Khapa has a servant to attend you." She nodded at the Tibetan by the gate. "But the fellow speaks not Uigur; so we are free to talk together, you and I. Oh, they know at the lamasery that I am here, but Dongkor Gelong has agreed that I should see you—to arrange for what is to happen this noon. I am free to come and go as I choose."

She dropped her chin into her hands idly, watching Khlit's stroking of the sword.

"I shall have many suitors to ride after me today at the *kök-bura*," she murmured, "for I am more beautiful than the flowers of the hills. Iskander Khan has sworn he will have me. He is a bold fellow. There will be scimitars drawn and blows struck. Dongkor Gelong has whispered to me that Iskander Khan will fall by your sword—from behind. Others, too, will die. It will be good sport. Have you truly sworn to kill the Khirghiz, O one without honor?"

The taunting words brought a grunt of anger from Khlit. The sword in his hand flew up. The edge of the blade drew swiftly across Sheillil's throat, pressing in the veil that hung from her cheeks.

The girl's eyes widened suddenly. Then she laughed musically. The veil hung by a few threads. It had been nearly severed in two under her chin. But there was not so much as a speck of blood on her throat to show where the curved sword had kissed the light veil. It had been a bold feat, by one who wielded a sword as deftly as Sheillil had whirled her tiny daggers in the dance of the night before.

Khlit was staring at her now, from deep-set eyes in which burned a sullen fire. She leaned closer to him, and the expression of her brown eyes changed.

"A shrewd blow!" she said softly. "But, if you slay the Khirghiz, it will be a curse upon your people, for there will be black war between the men from the Roof of the World and the Jun-gar. It will be the end of the power of the khans, Khirghiz and Jun-gar. The evil priesthood of the Yellow Hats will seize the citadels of the hills when the war has wasted the ranks of both sides. Oh, Dongkor Gelong is a man to be feared. He is reaching out from Kashgar for the mastery of the passes to the Roof of the World."

Khlit studied the girl attentively. Accustomed as he was to the moods of the dancer, he found that a new note had come into her voice. Her breath was quickened under the *khalat*.

"Fool," she said bitterly. "Do you think Dongkor Gelong will spare you when you have done what he desires? Your death is as needful as that of the bold Khirghiz."

"He has promised," responded Khlit gruffly, "that the gates of the lamasery shall be opened for me when I flee from the field of games."

Sheillil clasped the sleeve of the Cossack's coat.

"Men said that Khlit of the Curved Saber was crafty and wise in war. Have your wits fled? Are you stricken with fear of the Jallat Kum? Has Dongkor Gelong clouded your spirit so you can not see that the stroke that slays Iskander Khan will be the end of your people and mine?"

Khlit sheathed his weapon and took the girl's chin in a hand, lean but still powerful.

"Who are your people, Sheillil?" he asked.

XIV

THE girl did not draw back, nor did her eyes waver. She pointed behind Khlit, upward. The Cossack, however, did not shift his gaze.

"Yonder, above the walls of Kashgar," Sheillil whispered, "are the hills of the Roof of the World. There are my people, although I have not lived among them since I was a child."

"Your face is not that of a Khirghiz," growled Khlit.

"Nay; that is true." Sheillil paused briefly. "I have heard that my people once lived in a city at the threshold of the hills. It was the city of Talas and my father's ancestors worshiped in the mosque of Talas. Came the sand, and they took refuge in the higher land of their kingdom, called by some the Thian Shan and by us the Roof of the World. From time to time those who were strongest in faith made pilgrimages to the mosque of Talas, which was a holy spot, beloved of Allah.

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Now, that the blight of the Tsong Khapa has reached up into the hills and taken the Jallat Kum for a burial-ground, few go there. Nevertheless, when Dongkor Gelong confided his plan to me before he went to the Jun-gar, I went to Talas to await your coming. I wished to see if you were a weakling, who would fall prey to the lama, or a strong man. When Tuvron came, I pretended to be well-pleased with your plight, so that he should not suspect."

"And then?"

"Before I was a woman," went on Sheillil softly, "a raiding party of Usbeks, servants of the Tsong Khapa, carried me into slavery at Samarkand. But I was beautiful, and I did not die, living instead in favor and buying my freedom with gold. Yet I returned not to the hills. For a woman to be the wife of a khan must have honor, and I was a dancer. The day will come when Allah will show his mercy and I may go back."

Khlit was silent, pondering on what she had said. The ways of women were strange to him, and Sheillil was one of many faces.

"What master do you serve?" he growled.

In a flash the girl's expression changed.

"Has the wind a master? Has the eagle of the mountain-tops one whom he obeys? Nay; I follow my own will——"

"Today," broke in Khlit, "you will be sought by many suitors. Which will you favor?"

Sheillil touched his hand appealingly.

"Iskander Khan," she whispered. "He is the chieftain of my people. His arms are strong as his sword is quick. Many times have I watched him from a distance in Kashgar. It may be his heart will be touched with love for Sheillil. Allah may will that he take me to his home—for Dongkor Gelong has promised that my tongue will be slit and I shall be given for the sport of the camel-drivers if I fail him."

"And so you have asked that I harm him not? That would be my death."

"Nay," put in the girl. "At Talas you slew a man for me. I have not forgotten. I have arranged with Chu'n Yuen, who is blind as an over-fed jackal, a plan by which you and the Tatar can escape. While the *kök bura* is in full play ride swiftly from the horsemen to the city—the games will be on a plain without—and come to the shop of Chu'n Yuen. Most of the followers of the Yellow Hat will be at the games. Leave your tired horses in the street. Run through the shop of the armorer to this garden. In the corner behind that tree is a gate."

Sheillil pointed to a barred door, half-concealed by bushes.

"The city wall is within a few paces, outside that gate. Chu'n Yuen is a fox with two doors to his burrow. One of the poplars overhangs the city wall—the largest tree of the group, ripped by lightning. On the farther side of the tree are nails, cleverly placed so that a man may climb to the summit of the wall. In the overhanging branch is a rope of Chu'n Yuen's. By this you may drop over the wall. A servant will be waiting there with fresh horses. Ride straight for the hills. You may meet a party of horsemen, but they will be friends. Do this, and you will be safe!"

The brown eyes sought Khlit's hard face pleadingly. The Cossack smiled grimly.

"Many tales have you told me, little sparrow. How do I know that this one is the truth? It has the smell of a trap. And Iskander Khan is my foe——"

"Would I take so much trouble to slay you?" Sheillil demanded. "If Iskander Khan had been so minded, and I had spoken your name to him, you would not leave here alive."

"Nay, Sheillil," Khlit shook his head. "Then Dongkor Gelong would have disposed of your lover promptly. This is a city of lies. Go you with Iskander Khan. The Khirghiz is no weakling; he can guard himself and you."

"And you?"

Sheillil leaned forward breathlessly. Khlit stretched himself like one awakening from sleep.

"I, Sheillil? Chagan and I will ride from *kök bura* to the gates of the lamasery. Dongkor Gelong has promised that they will not be closed to us, for he will see to it himself, being kept by the law of his priesthood from attendance at the games."

With that he rose and left the garden. The Tibetan followed silently, with a glance at Sheillil. The girl knelt with hands clenched against her sides, the veil hiding her features, but her eyes dark with a woman's anger.

Then she sprang to her feet swiftly and unbarred the door in the bushes. When

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Chu'n Yuen returned, he found only the empty bowl of wine and the whet-stone lying on the rug.

XV

THE *kök bura* of Kashgar in the fifth moon of that year, it is written in the annals of Batur Madi, was long remembered by those who saw it. And the riders told their children what they had seen in the Love Chase of Sheillil of Samarkand. As is usual with those who share in an event, the tale told by them grew until it magnified the number of men killed and the mysterious events which followed upon the ending of the *kök bura*.

According to Batur Madi, the Love Chase grew from the first form of the *kök bura*, in which a slain sheep was given to a rider. This man was pursued by his comrades until another had contrived to take the sheep. But, in the Love Chase of the Khirghiz, a girl who had it in her heart to yield to a husband, mounted a well-chosen horse and armed herself with a heavy whip. The spectators formed a circle about the girl and her suitors while the men tried to seize her as she eluded them. Thus, says Batur Madi, the strongest man and most skilful became the possessor of the girl, as was fitting, while those who failed had only the stinging scars of the whip-lash to heal their empty hearts.

But the *kök bura* of the fifth moon was such a one as had not been seen before. And in the annals of Batur Madi such a one is not recorded since that time.

Two things served to draw nearly the whole of the people of Kashgar out to the stretch of plain by the river bank on the side of the city farthest from the mountains. All, in fact, save a few drunken Khirghiz, some slaves and mendicants and Chu'n Yuen, who would not leave his shop, and Dongkor Gelong, who was never seen in public. First, rumor of weighty events that might come to pass had somehow spread among the Khirghiz and Usbeks, who rode fully armed and alert to the spot.

And Sheillil, the beauty of Samarkand and the dancer of the lamasery courtyard, was to be the object of the chase.

It was noted by the *hafiz*, who was among the first to arrive, that even the Chubil Khans were present, having come in a procession of state from the lamasery, preceded by *manshis* bearing the sacred pastils and basins wherein were glowing coals and sweet-scented roots. The lamas, mounted on silk-canopied horses and accompanied by the standards of their order, were joined by an array of the Yellow Hat soldiery.

Khlit, who was early upon the scene with Chagan and well-mounted by order of Dongkor Gelong, noted that Tuvron, who was in charge of the soldiery, arranged his followers in the form of a three-sided square with the fourth side nearest the city walls. The spectators of the caravans and the townspeople were afoot. But the Tibetans and Usbeks, who were very numerous, were mounted.

Thus the watchers formed a solid wall about a cleared stretch on the plain, perhaps five hundred paces square. The followers of the Khirghiz khans were grouped in a mass on the side of the enclosure farthest from the walls of Kashgar. Iskander Khan, with his companion, Bassanghor, and several other nobles of the hillmen, rode to the center, waiting for the arrival of Sheillil. They were joined by single riders from among the Usbeks and even a Dungan or two of rank.

Khlit and Chagan were the last to ride out from the crowd. Chagan's powerful figure drew instant attention from the group of horsemen, who noted his Tatar dress and the ease with which he sat his rangy mount. Khlit was the object of less attention, for he was gray-haired and the manner in which he held himself betokened little interest in what was to happen.

Keenly the contestants eyed each other and the horses. Khlit saw that Iskander Khan rode a small, dun-colored pony of vicious temper, but, as he guessed shrewdly, quick and active on its feet. Bassanghor was well-mounted—a mettlesome Persian horse which threaded in and out among the group at the pressure of his rider's knees, to the delight of the watchers who were keen judges of horseflesh.

Khlit's mustache twitched in a grim smile as he noted that all the contenders were armed—a fact which prophesied ill for some. Chagan had shaken off the gloom that had possessed him for the last two days and was taunting the Usbek youths in high good-humor. Action and the prospect

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of conflict roused him, and Khlit, who missed nothing, saw that the Khirghiz were equally gay.

A shout went up from the spectators, who saw Sheillil escorted by Tibetan guards come through the throng by the walls. The girl wore her costume of the morning, with a heavy, knotted whip in her hand. She rode a white Arabian horse of Dongkor Gelong's stables, sitting lightly in the small, wooden saddle. She went directly to one of the corners of the square, and Tuvron, who was acting as judge, motioned the riders back to the opposite corner.

Here they formed in a line, Khlit taking his place between Chagan and a trembling youth in Dungan garb. Tuvron shouted to the Tibetans. The watchers nearest the riders cried out at them shrilly, a word of praise for the Usbeks and a gibe for the Khirghiz. Some, however, were silent, for there was a tensity of suppressed excitement in the air.

Abruptly a rumble of drums sounded by Tuvron. Sheillil spurred her horse from her corner of the square. Khlit saw the line of riders dart forward. But he and Chagan held their impatient horses to a trot, keeping on one flank of the horsemen.

Sheillil had reined in her mount and was watching the oncoming group keenly. Whips waving in air, bent low on their saddles, the men were shortening the distance rapidly. As they came within fifty paces of her, Khlit saw the girl crouch and put spurs to her horse's side. The Arab leaped and was away swiftly, quartering across the course of the approaching men.

So well-timed had been Sheillil's move that the group swept past her almost within arm's-reach. Iskander Khan, however, on his active pony was about on the instant and after her. Khlit called to Chagan and galloped down toward her. He saw Sheillil glance at them fleetingly and urge her mount farther to the side away from them.

The spectators, who had greeted the girl's maneuver with a shout of approval, were silent for a moment. Then cries rang out. Bassanghor had approached close to Sheillil on the side away from Khlit when an Usbek rider blundered into him. A quick thrust of the shoulder of the Persian horse and the latter was on the ground, rider pinned beneath him. A Dungan coming behind was too close or too clumsy to turn out and fell headlong, lying quietly where he had rolled.

The girl smiled as she saw what had happened. Then another Usbek, angered at the fate of his countryman, rode at Bassanghor. Two swords flashed simultaneously. Bassanghor rode clear, but the other swayed in his saddle and turned his mount toward the spectators, blood streaming from the side of his neck.

The girl, who was watching her pursuers closely, was now near the point from which the men had started, Iskander Khan riding with furious swiftness close behind her, and the Cossack and Tatar holding aloof on her right hand.

Suddenly she swerved to the left, eluding a Khirghiz who grasped at her. This turn brought the riders together as they followed her, and Khlit saw another go down in the crush. The girl circled swiftly around the square, her Arab keeping easily ahead of the others. But, quickly as she maneuvered, Iskander Khan kept his place close to her horse's tail.

A Dungan, well-mounted, drew abreast of the Khirghiz leader. Instantly Iskander Khan had drawn his scimiter. The Dungan swerved away, but too late to save himself a slashed shoulder.

"Ha, lord," chuckled Chagan, "the blood is beginning to flow, even as I foretold."

"Keep close to the Khirghiz, fool!" growled the Cossack.

They were now in the lead of the remaining riders, who were watching each other warily with drawn weapons, and close to Iskander Khan. Sheillil threw them a swift glance, dashing the long hair from her flushed face. She was heading now straight for the side of the square nearest the walls, with the riders strung nearly across the field.

XVI

AND then for the second time the watchers raised a delighted shout. Verily, this was a chase to be remembered! Seldom had such riding as that of the girl been seen by the men of Kashgar. For Sheillil had dodged once and then again to the other side. She whirled her horse on its haunches and darted back straight through the pursuers.

Iskander Khan cursed and wheeled his

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pony after her in time to see her lean to the side of her mount, avoiding the clutch of one rider, and strike another heavily in the face with the whip.

There were but four after her now, owing to the slain and injured and the fact that Khlit and Chagan waited, where she had turned, near the town side of the square. The two Khirghiz chieftains, one of their followers and a lone Usbek pressed her close.

"By the winged horse of Kaidu!" swore the sword-bearer. "She rides like one born of the winds. Ho! Yon Khirghiz had a taste of the whip. See; Iskander Khan has her *khalat.* Nay—may the devil roast me—she has shed the cloak. They come back to us now."

"Aye," growled Khlit. "Be ready."

Sheillil was flying toward them, the two khans and the Usbek after her. Khlit sat his horse silently, watching closely what happened. He saw that the girl was being penned in one of the corners. At the same time he noted that Bassanghor Khan had edged toward the Usbek. Another moment and the Persian horse had crossed the path of the Usbek, who pulled up with an oath. Seeing the Khirghiz's ready weapon, however, the other drew off.

"Ha! That was well done," commented Chagan. "Has our time come?"

"Come," said Khlit.

They wheeled toward the girl, who was near the corner. But Iskander Khan, coming up swiftly, was before them. The Khirghiz rose in his saddle as Sheillil leaned away from him. Then the girl reined in her horse. To Khlit it seemed that it was done purposely. A shout went up as Iskander Khan caught her bodily from the saddle and held her close.

The Khirghiz horsemen spurred toward their chief, for there were angry mutterings from the Usbeks. Then the voice of Tuvron rose above the confusion.

"Fools!" he stormed at his men, pointing. "Look yonder. After them!"

Two riders had broken through the spectators on the city side of the square and were speeding for the walls, bent low on their mounts. Khlit and Chagan, instead of following Iskander Khan, had wheeled through the square and were now nearing the gate of the almost deserted town.

Choosing the moment when the attention of spectators and riders was centered on the end of the *kök bura,* the Tatars had gained a good start on the horsemen who spurred after them, led by Tuvron in a black rage. Their course took them through the gate, which was unguarded, and straight to the lamasery courtyard.

Here a few servants gaped at them in surprize. As Dongkor Gelong had promised, the door of the monastery was ajar. Khlit and Chagan flung themselves from their horses and ran up the steps.

A half dozen Tibetan spearmen sprang up in the entrance, hearing the footsteps, but drew back on seeing who the two were. They had had orders to expect Khlit and Chagan and to allow them to pass. True, the Tibetans heard a confused shouting in the street outside; yet this also was to be anticipated, for they had been informed that the two Tatars might be pursued. As yet the courtyard wall concealed the pursuers from sight.

From the stairway the two crossed the main hall of the building, to the narrow flight of steps that led to the monks' cells above. Even Chagan was silent as Khlit paused for a second to listen to the clatter of hoofs in the courtyard. The sword-bearer's scarred face was tense and recklessly alight. The Cossack was breathing heavily from his run, but his eyes burned with a steady fire. He caught Chagan by the arm.

"Guard the stairs," he said quickly, "for a space. Then escape—if you can."

Chagan nodded understanding and drew his sword, the heavy, two-handed weapon that had earned him his surname.

"Nay, lord," he growled, "we may yet win free of this cursed place. I marked a window that gave on the courtyard wall——"

But Khlit had vanished in the shadows above him. There was a rush of feet across the hall, and a group of the Yellow Hats, following the directions of a startled monk, dashed at the stairs. They drew back at sight of Chagan's bulk in the dark stairway.

Tuvron's voice pierced the momentary silence while Tatar and soldiers stared at each other.

"There is but one here!" the Chubil Khan cried shrilly. "Cut him down——"

The men made a rush for the steps. Chagan had taken his stand several feet above the level of the wall. He had the

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advantage of being in semi-darkness while his foes were exposed to view. Moreover the space was narrow. Two rapid blows of his weapon knocked down the spears that menaced him, and the head of the leading Tibetan, still wearing its bright-hued hat, went spinning among them.

Chagan gave back a step or two shrewdly as they pressed him. His long sword made deadly play in the close mass of assailants whose shorter scimiters sought vainly to pierce his guard.

"Come to the feast, dogs," growled the Tatar with bared teeth, "the kites are waiting to pick at the eyes of the fallen, and the wolves scent carrion! Nay, this is a feast of the gods!"

He grunted as a spear scraped his leg and another tore the coat from his chest. Heaving his powerful body forward, he lashed viciously at his foes until the mass fell back with dead and torn bodies weighing on their shoulders. Chagan taunted them as he fought, revelling in the press of bodies and the shrieks of pain.

Then he saw that the hall was filled with lamas and their followers, come from the *kök bura*. Tuvron had vanished, however, and Chagan recalled that this was not the only stairway to the floor above. With a last shout he turned and dashed up the steps.

Through the deserted passages of the monastery he sped, his eyes strained anxiously for sight of Khlit. He met no one until he came to the door of Dongkor Gelong's cell. Here he halted in his tracks. Through the open door he saw the figure of a guard on the floor. Khlit was calmly wiping the bloodied blade of his sword upon the man's clothes.

At his table sat Dongkor Gelong, Chutuktu Lama of the Tsong Khapa. He was dressed in state robes. As if asleep, he rested his body and head on the table, both arms outstretched, his forehead pressed among the black wood ashes of divination beside the sandalwood box. A crimson rivulet issued from under his chin and traced its way across the table.

"Dongkor Gelong," said Khlit grimly, seeing the sword-bearer, "has found that we are men of our word, you and I. The carrion priest loved too well to see men tremble to know my fear of him was pretended. As we promised, we have come back to the lamasery."

XVII

THE window that Chagan had mentioned was not far from the cell of the dead lama. It was lucky for them that this was so. A passageway leading from the cell enabled them to avoid the followers of Tuvron and gain the gallery which overlooked the courtyard.

As they ran, they heard the rush of footsteps through the corridors of the upper floor as the men of the Yellow Hat spread through the place looking for them. The stairs up which they had come were guarded, as was the lower door. But Chagan, with an eye to future necessity, had seen that the window to which they came was in a sheltered spot and was wide enough to admit the passage of even his bulky frame.

As they reached the window a startled shout proclaimed that the men of the Yellow Hat had found their dead leader. A hasty glance showed Khlit that the courtyard held a great number of horses, but few men, the greater part having pressed into the monastery. There was no time to weigh their chances. It was the courtyard wall or death at the hands of the Yellow Hats behind them.

Clinging to Chagan's hand, Khlit pushed himself through the aperture and dropped to the surface of the wall beneath them. Chagan followed at once with a leap that almost pitched him headlong to the stone pavement of the court. Their appearance was greeted with a cry by the men below.

Arrows whistled by Khlit as he ran along the flat top of the wall. The Usbeks and Yellow Hats in the courtyard were scrambling to their horses or running for the entrance. But their progress was hindered by the number of horses. Khlit and the Tatar gained the corner of the court before those within could reach the gate, some hundred paces distant.

Khlit noted that the alley leading to Chu'n Yuen's was opposite them and nearer than the gate of the courtyard. Without slackening his pace, he leaped from the wall, landing heavily but without losing his feet. Chagan, who was heavier, fell to his knees with a grunt, for the wall was twice the height of a man.

Horsemen were issuing from the gate by now and heading down the street toward

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them. From the embrasures of the monastery pistols cracked. But the alley was near at hand.

Khlit heard Chagan pounding behind him and swearing. And the clatter of hoofs sounded behind the sword-bearer. If the door of the shop should be barred, they were lost. But Sheillil had promised that it would be open.

The Cossack gained the door and thrust it open with his foot. He jerked the panting Tatar inside as spear-points flashed past them with a rush of horses. Slamming the heavy gate shut, he barred it and ran through the shop. Chu'n Yuen was not to be seen.

A few men in the wine-shop started to their feet as the two ran through the place and the women's court. The garden to the rear was deserted.

They found the tree, as Sheillil had promised, and on the other side of the city wall four horses were in waiting, held by a servant. The man disappeared into the bushes as they mounted.

"By Satan's bones!" swore Chagan. "I am glad to let a horse's legs do my running for me after that foot-race. Whither now, Khlit, lord?"

Khlit led the way at a trot out of the thicket in the direction of the hills which loomed not far away. As they came out in the open, leading the spare horses by their tethers, he pointed to the plain abreast of them.

In a cloud of dust an array of horsemen was headed in their direction at a furious pace. The leaders were Khirghiz, closely pressed by Usbek riders. In the dust he saw scimiters rise and fall and the glint of speeding arrows.

XVIII

IN THE annals of Batur Madi it is related how swords were drawn at the ending of the *kök bura* and a battle ensued which lasted until darkness. Around the person of Sheillil, the dancer of Samarkand, says Batur Madi, the Khirghiz and Usbeks fought until the slain hillmen littered the way to the mountains. Following this, the woman disappeared from the towns of Kashgaria, and it was not known whether she was among the slain or not.

Yet this is not the whole truth.

When Sheillil was caught and held by Iskander Khan, the chieftain raised a shout of triumph and would have pressed her hot face to his bearded lips to seal his conquest. But the girl twisted in his grasp until she faced him and thrust her slim hand in his beard, holding him back.

"Fool! Blind of the blind!" she hissed. "See you not this is not your doing, but mine? Harken to me if you would save your life."

Sheer surprize held the khan silent. Surprize at her words and at hearing his own tongue spoken.

"Bend closer," whispered Sheillil; "you alone must hear this. Great is your peril, O Khan. Dongkor Gelong has laid a trap for you here. This game was his doing, and an assassin of his was to stab you in the back as you rode after me. Failing that, the Yellow Hats in the square around us will take care that you and your men do not leave the field. It was for this he brought you to Kashgar and had me dance before you. I was to be the bait. This is the truth."

Slowness of wit was not one of Iskander Khan's failings. His sharp eyes bored into the girl's flushed face as if he would strip her of her loveliness and sift the meaning of her words.

"Ha!" he growled. "Dongkor Gelong pledged our safety. Why do you say this?"

"Because I, too, am of the hills, and your people are mine." The girl tried to shake the sturdy form of the chieftain in her earnestness. "Nay, I could not speak before this, for you would not have left the gates of Kashgar alive. If the man who was to slay you had approached you, I would have ridden between. Allah has granted me this mercy, to open your eyes to this peril. Summon your men and ride for the hills. Look! See if it is not the truth."

The khan tore his eyes from the quivering face of the girl and glanced around what had been the square. He beheld Usbeks and Tibetans riding toward them with black looks. Groups of the Yellow Hats under the lamas were circling toward the town. The Chinese and Dungans were fleeing the field, sensing coming trouble. Iskander Khan, still holding the girl, rose in his saddle.

"Ho! Kara Khirghiz!" he bellowed.

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"Here is treachery. To me, men of the hills. To me!"

Bassanghor's shout answered him, and the Khirghiz closed their ranks, spurring to the side of their khan. The hillmen had scented conflict, and their dark faces were alight, for they loved well the giving and taking of blows. At Iskander's rapid command they formed into a group and galloped toward the town, riding down spearmen who tried to oppose them and fleeing townspeople indifferently.

Iskander Khan, from the center of his men, had seen that the Yellow Hats were fewer on this side, and he led his men in a circle of the walls to gain the side nearest the hills where was shelter. But the lamas' men outnumbered the Khirghiz, keeping pace closely and doing serious execution with their arrows.

Once clear of the town it became a running fight, with the Khirghiz, who were skilled at this form of warfare, making frequent stands to hold off their enemies. Yet their number became rapidly smaller. In their path two horsemen appeared, waiting their coming.

"What men are those, Sheillil?" demanded Iskander Khan.

"They are Tatars, lord," explained the girl, who had recognized Khlit and Chagan. "They are the ones, tricked by Dongkor Gelong, who were to have slain you or suffer death themselves. Yet they did not attempt it. One is the Cossack, Khlit, the Kha Khan of the Jun-gar. They are one with us in peril."

"Nay, they will get little but hard blows if they join us. Still, if they carry swords, they are welcome."

Khlit and Iskander Khan exchanged no greeting when they met, beyond a quick glance, but the Cossack offered the hard-pressed chieftain the two spare horses they led. Sheillil sprang to the back of one, the khan taking the other without slackening pace.

In the book of Batur Madi it is written how the Khirghiz band fought off the men of the Yellow Hats as they rode into the foot-hills toward the Roof of the World. How they swam a river and held it for a while against the men of the lamas. How Khlit and a dozen Khirghiz blocked a mountain pass while the others rode ahead. And how all but a few of the hillmen fell fighting before darkness closed down on the mountain defiles and the remnant of the Khirghiz vanished into the shadows of the forests.

The moon had risen and turned the snow-crests of the Thian Shan into white beacons and the mist in the valleys into a gray veil when the party of Iskander Khan came to a halt wearily. Only two horses were left them and Iskander Khan counted only nine of his hundred left alive.

Bassanghor Khan was not among the nine.

The Khirghiz chieftain leaned against the horse which Sheillil rode and sheathed his sword.

"By the bones of my grandsire," he said solemnly, "by the grave of my father and by the faith of a hillman of the Black Khirghiz, I swear an oath. Witness, Tatars. The passes of the hills and the caravan paths shall be closed to the breed of the Yellow Hats. Their enemies will be my friends. I and my men will bring death and dishonor upon Dongkor Gelong and those who have betrayed us and slain Bassanghor Khan."

Sheillil leaned toward him shyly, yet with a trace of her customary boldness. Her voice was light, in spite of weariness, for Iskander Khan, who was the chieftain of her people, had said that she would be his wife and have honor for the service she had done him at Kashgar.

"It was the plan of Dongkor Gelong," she said softly, "to make war between the Jun-gar and the Khirghiz. It was for that he summoned Khlit, the Kha Khan, and you to Kashgar. Your safety lies in an alliance. So much I learned in the towns, for men spoke freely before me. Why not have peace between the hillmen and the Tatars?"

Iskander Khan was silent in thought. Then he left Sheillil and went to where Khlit and Chagan were standing a little apart. He held up his hand.

"Treachery has made bad blood between your people and mine, Khlit," he said bluntly. "But the blood that was shed today has made that as naught. We have fought together, you and I, and my quarrel has been yours. Henceforth, if it is your will, the boundary between our lands shall be inviolate and there will be a welcome for you and the khans of the Jun-gar in my tent. I swear it."

Khlit nodded. By his tone Iskander Khan did not suspect how much the words

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he had spoken meant to the Cossack. From the time when the two from the Jun-gar had waited for the Khirghiz outside Kashgar, Khlit had hoped that they could come to an understanding.

"The boundary will be inviolate, Iskander Khan," he repeated gravely. "And I shall tell the *kurultai* of the Jun-gar there is peace. I give the pledge for myself and my people."

He went to his horse and loosened one of the saddle-bags on the beast's back. He took the bulky bag to Iskander Khan.

"Here is a gift," he observed briefly, "to seal our new peace."

Chagan watched silently. But as the moonlight faded some hours later and the first tinge of dawn colored the peaks at their backs, a thought came to the sword-bearer, and he turned to Khlit, who was sitting beside him, nursing his sword.

"Ho, lord," he muttered sleepily, rubbing his sore legs, "it was a good day's work. But when we ride back to the *kurultai* how will you explain the oracle of the Dalai Lama that sent you to Talas?"

Khlit laughed like one newly freed from care.

"We will tell the truth, Chagan. Has not the oracle come true! It was the word of the Dalai Lama that we should find aid for the Jun-gar in the fifth moon of the year of the Ape. Have we not found it?"

As Khlit said, so it proved. Iskander Khan kept his word. Some said this was because of the wisdom of his wife, Sheillil of Samarkand; others, because Khlit had been his companion in battle. But others, who were wise, whispered that it was because Iskander Khan found in the saddle-bag Khlit gave him the newly severed head of Dongkor Gelong.

NIGHT MEMORIES

by EDMUND LEAMY

I LIKE to lie in my bed o' nights with the clean white sheets around me,
And dreamily think of those other days and those other nights that found me
Wrapped in a blanket, out on the veldt, my face upturned to the sky,
And the song of the open filling my ears along with the night wind's sigh.

I love to hear through the hum of the streets the palm-tree's quivering note,
The thousand and one little lonely sounds that bring a lump to the throat,
The jackal's cry, and the lion's bark, and the breath of sleeping men,
The cough of the sentry keeping watch—and I hear them all again.

Hear them all as I lie in bed, and see with dear memory's eyes
The Southern Cross and the brilliant stars lighting the southern skies;
See them all as I saw them of old, ere sleep came tumbling down
To bring me dreams of a far-away home in the arms of the turbulent town.

And then when dawn comes creeping to me here in my soft, white bed
I waken up as a million thoughts come rushing into my head;
And somehow I miss the rustle and stir of an army, the short night done,
Waking to toil and the long, long trek of the long, long day begun.

For never a man with good red blood coursing his pulsing veins
Who's tramped the tropical open veldt, the desert, the hills, the plains,
But sometimes pines for the days gone by, the life so brave and free,
And the lonely nights in the lonely lands, over the lonely sea!

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The CAMP-FIRE

A MEETING-PLACE for READERS, WRITERS and ADVENTURERS

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance: many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

OUR "Lost Trails" department could furnish many a dramatic tale, happy or pathetic, if its service were not of so private a nature. Letters of gratitude come to us, of course, but they are generally evidently not meant for publication. Sometimes, though, a comrade who has found an old pal rejoices aloud and, there being no reason for not doing so, expresses his gratitude to the Camp-Fire at large for the service one or more of you has done him. Here, for example:

Schenectady, N. Y.

Sixteen years ago this Summer I parted from a comrade in San Francisco, after a comradeship of two years. I had to go to Panama, where there was a revolution pending. He had to go to Oregon. Letters to him were returned.

AS TIME went by, a longing to get in touch with him once more was frustrated by a lack of knowledge of his whereabouts. Then came *Adventure* and "Lost Trails." Skeptical, I put off from time to time making use of the department. I myself turn to Camp-Fire first, and as time passed and I met in those pages trail-mates of other days, and in fancy was carried back to other climes and countries, as well as our own "God's country," I realized there was a possibility of picking up my pal again and advertised in first May issue.

I was advised by you of his address, furnished by a reader. I immediately wrote and today received a long letter from him. My card had followed him through several cities, finally reaching him in Scranton, Pa., a bare 150 miles distant, after an absence of sixteen years and a separation on the other side of the Continent.

Long life to *Adventure* and regards to Camp-Fire bunch. I am with you in spirit, if absent in flesh, and who can say what time may bring forth? We live in hopes, and Wanderlust never dies in the heart of the true adventurer. *A l'outrance! Beneplacito!*—One of you, G. LESTER AUMIC.

ANOTHER view-point of Calamity Jane. Jane seems to have made a vivid impression on all who saw her, which is easy to understand.

Tacoma, Washington.

I was interested in the article *re* Calamity Jane. I met her several times when I was operator at Buffalo station. She waited there a week once for her "man friend" to come in from the south *via* the old Texas cattle trail that passed just west of the station.

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MY IMPRESSION is that *he* was a member of Dutch Henry's famous band of outlaws. Brininstool gives her a clean passport as a trusted Government scout; it may be true, but I never heard of it. She was a well-known character of the early days on the frontier, but I never heard anything to her credit. I know of my own knowledge she was one of the most profane women that ever lived.

She had a hard, repellant face, and she was *not* a noticeably large woman. She was at home on a horse and with a Colt's navy, all right. I knew her before she went to Deadwood; her character may have improved later, but she was a woman desperado when I knew her.—W. A. STERNBERG.

HERE are a couple of letters about the "turning white" disease that played a part in a story by Kathrene and Robert Pinkerton. Also another letter suggested by the subject.

Berkeley, Calif.

Re the Pinkertons' "Vitelego"—my second cousin, —— ——, of Portland, Oregon (brother of the eminent Philadelphia physician —— —— and —— ——), had the disease, if it can be called that, about ten years ago.

The family on the —— side are of the old Portuguese Jews (earlier Spanish) and olive-complexioned.

I "stopped" over in Portland on a trip from Alaska, and was horrified. He calmly explained the thing. He was half "white" at the time; the change had been going on for something like a year, I think, and later on the process became complete. He is a man of about sixty at present.— —— ——.

Russellville, Ark.

Speaking of the "white Indians," a negro in our State turned white last year with that disease.—RUBY E. LIVINGSTON.

Schenectady, N. Y.

After reading the very interesting story of the "white Indians" by Kathrene and Robert Pinkerton, it occurred to me that it might interest *Adventure* readers to know that among the Maya Indians of Mexico there were many who had blonde hair and blue eyes, and in some respects the build and features of a white race.

THE Mayos were a big tribe who lived in villages along the upper stretches of the Mayo and Tuerte Rivers in Southern Sonora and Northern Sinaloa. They tilled the soil extensively and were said to have numbered as many as twenty thousand when the Spaniards first found them about the middle of the sixteenth century.

They have a tradition, that was still a tradition when the Spaniards came, that tells of an expedition a party of them once made to the mouth of the Rio Mayo, where it enters the Pacific, and there finding a lot of castaways who had been shipwrecked. They were very large men whose hair and beards were long and yellow and whose eyes were blue and who were thought to be superhuman. The "strange men," as they were called, were adopted into the Mayo tribe with whom they ever after lived. This tradition came to me from old Mayo Indians many years ago and I never doubted its truth.—DONALD F. MCCARTHY.

SCALPING. A bit about the knife that did the work. And bathing.

I am not an authority on Indians, though my nurse and foster-mother was the squaw of Spotted Tail, chief of the Ogallala Sioux, and was adopted by him into the tribe, according to the stories told me by my parents. This in introduction to the subject of scalping.

ONE of the principal reasons that scalping was fatal was that the scalpee was already dead or nearly so. When otherwise, the wound was decidedly septic. The so-called scalping-knife was often made of iron tires of burned prairie schooners and not used exclusively for scalping. They were used for all sorts of camp work, as the modern camper uses his knife. With the proverbial uncleanliness of the Indian and the porous condition of the iron, the knife absorbed the animal fats and substances and became very deadly in itself.

WHILE engineering in New Mexico and Texas for the Santa Fé Railroad in 1887 I came across a character known as "Tanglefoot," horse-herder for the big English Ranch, who had been scalped in the middle of the 70's. Don't know his story, but did see the wound, a rough circle of bare skull. Incidentally he participated one evening in a discussion on bathing and remarked "I always take a bath when indications point that a way."

"What are the indications, Tanglefoot?"

"When I begin to itch."

Pretty good reason.

Incidentally, though I have been unable through age and disability to get Over There, I have the honor to be the father of the first girl or woman commissioned by the U. S., Jeannette C. Mullikin, 1st Lieut. U. S. Med. Corps.—LOUIS C. MULLIKIN.

OUR Camp-Fire pet, the Gila Monster, comes up to the blaze once more:

Raledon, New Mexico.

I very often see in Camp-Fire discussion and mention made of old-timers of the passing West whom I have known years ago from Texas to Montana. I am no Spring chicken myself. Wilbur Hall dubs me "Old Buccaneer," for which I forgive him, he not being altogether responsible. I think, however, he will vouch for some of my wanderings.

WHEN I started to write, however, the foregoing was not the intended purpose, and to get down to it will say I have been for several weeks out west of Nogales, Arizona, in the Pajarito Mountains along the Mexican border and I got behind with our magazine. Got three in a bunch when I got to Nogales. Now I don't know whether the Gila monster discussion has closed or not but it did seem fairly well started. Now as a matter of fact when Gila monsters are concerned I am not scientifically inclined. But I do wish to say I have seen hundreds of them, caught a few, and have never been bitten by one.

Now I am going to side with Major Rodney inasmuch as if any person should have asked me the color of one of these reptiles I should promptly answer "black and yellow." I may be color-blind; then again my eyes may be such as to prevent me from distinguishing gentle, easy gradations in color.

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THEY are slow of movement, said to live on bugs, bird eggs and such. Have a peculiar habit of puffing or blowing their breath at one when molested. Breath is said to have a sickening effect, but from personal experience can not say. They snap viciously at one and poke a stick at one and he will grab the end of it.

I remember the first one I ever caught. After poking a Suhvara rib at him he grabbed the end of it and hung on while I carried him thus a couple of miles to camp.

I had another experience on Cave Creek about forty miles from Phoenix, Arizona. I caught one and brought it into the assay office of a cyanide plant I was running at the time, and with the aid of a glass tube, put 20 cubic centimeters of 50 per cent. cyanide solution down him and he just licked his chops and acted as though more would be acceptable. It took an equal amount of strong nitric to finish him an hour later. So I go on record with the statement that K C N solution will not kill Gila monsters and recommend use of HNO_3.

YES, for the "love of Mike," insist on spelling Navajo with a *j*. Don't try to "Easternize" our beloved West. That's about all we have left of the old West, is the names, and if pen pushers and machine-thumpers switch the spelling of those around until they are no longer recognizable, we have naught left.

Apropos of the use of the *h* and the *j* in an Indian name, I will call your attention to the word "Mojave"—the name of a tribe of Indians, a famous (or infamous) stretch of desert, one county, one town and one river. The county is Mohave Co., Arizona, and, as you see, is spelled with an *h*. The rest of the trimmings mentioned as being called Mojave are in California and spells with a *j*. Why this difference in spelling I can not say.—ALEX MCLAREN.

A PHYSICIAN comrade tells us that a passage in one of our stories might conceivably make serious trouble. At least it is safest to publish his letter. Though the author's reply shows that he was sufficiently warranted so far as facts and the requirements of fiction are concerned, there is always the remote chance that the "remedy" used in the story might be tried in some real life emergency. The two letters follow:

Green Island, N. Y.

As a medical man I wish to utter a criticism of the action of the hero, as physician, who, to save the life of a diphtheritic child, inserts a glass tube in its throat and sucks out the "deadly mucus." It isn't the latter which suffocates the child, but the membrane, which forms and mechanically occludes the air-passages, causing suffocation and death.

THE only thing to do in a case such as the author describes is to puncture the windpipe just above the breastbone (with a jack-knife if necessary), making a hole big enough for free breathing. If this membrane extends the full length of the windpipe the case is hopeless; of course, I mean in the absence of diphtheritic antitoxin. Sucking the mucus from a diphtheritic throat wouldn't save the patient's life, but only kill the would-be good Samaritan. I wish to state the above emphatically just to prevent spreading misinformation and to save some misguided reader who might imitate the hero, while living in some out of the way place and confronted with a case of membrane tonsillitis or diphtheria.

Apropos of medical topics, most authors are guilty of using medical terms without knowing their exact meaning, in particular the use of the word "aphasia" to denote loss of memory. Any good dictionary will tell them that "aphasia" means loss of speech. "Amnesia" means loss of memory.—H. F. ALBRECHT, M.D.

Seattle, Wash.

During the dark ages of medicine, which is still to a large extent in a process of experimentation, many ways were tried of relieving sufferers from diphtheria—sometimes called "croup." My story was purposely dated to show its relation to those dark ages: the man *Hume* doing something which no one able to diagnose the case would now think of doing, which was often done before the subject was properly understood, the patient recovering when it would have recovered without the operation, because in ninety-nine per cent. of cases sucking at the membrane would have no effect but that of endangering the life of the operator. In conformance with the then state of knowledge, I used the words "deadly mucus."

I WAS greatly surprised at being criticized, as I thought I had made myself clear; and the critic himself errs more than I did in advocating the slitting of the windpipe with a jack-knife, without adding the insertion of a silver tube, without which the patient could not breathe. I protest against that suggestion of treatment, because the operator takes no risk himself, and would therefore not hesitate or think of the danger—almost certain infection and death from loss of blood. Unless the antitoxin can be obtained, it is best to leave the diphtheria patient entirely to nature, and keep it warm.

BUT I have made a discovery which, if made before I wrote the story, would have caused me not to write it. I find that Kipling, in one of his best known books, "Stalky & Co." has the schoolmaster save the life of a boy by doing just what my man *Hume* did, without losing his own life! Had I read that book, I would not have, as I said, written the tale. Now, since Kipling is so much more widely read than I am, would it not be well for my critic to write him, advising him to stop selling "Stalky & Co." because he is spreading so much misinformation? Of course Kipling's tale has to do with the era before antitoxin, as mine has. You will remember that I wrote that antitoxin was only just coming into vogue when *Hume* left England, implying he had hardly heard of it. And any one who knows how reluctant doctors were to try the new treatment will agree with my attitude in writing.—S. B. H. HURST.

FOLLOWING our Camp-Fire custom, on the occasion of his first story in our magazine Barry Scobee rises and gives an account of himself. Also he gives us

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an interesting word on the facts back of his story:

I never had a real adventure in my life. Isn't that some confession! That is, I mean, an adventure like getting lost at the North Pole, or falling into a mine full of snakes and being fished out by a dusky maiden who led me to a deposit of pure gold, or being pushed from a Chicago skyscraper through a skylight eleven stories below into a nest of counterfeiters. It seems I don't have any luck connecting with the thrillers. Maybe it's because I was born at Pollock, Mo., not far from the Iowa line on a farm, in 1885. Or, to be more logical, maybe my poor luck comes from the fact that my ancestors were Scots, Irish, English, Canadians, Virginians and Kentuckians.

AS A matter of fact, it does seem to me that what I have got into has been exceptionally bare of adventures that arrived at a climax. I've had lots of good starts, though. With two exceptions the things I have done have not had to do with promising fields, according to my mental make-up. I attended, but failed to get a degree—owing, I hope, mainly to a lack of interest—at the State Normal at Kirksville, Mo. Then I followed, off and on, the trade of printing, was with surveyors some in the Texas Panhandle, joined the Army and got to the Philippines in 1910, have done considerable newspaper work among the military and on the Mexican border, and for a year and a half helped another man gather material for a "popular" history of that part of Texas lying west of the Pecos and up to the edge of El Paso. Traveled 30,000 miles in a Ford, saw every road, and met nearly every man in that region, and went back in history to 1535 when de Vaca was out there.

BUT here's my luck. I was an attendant in a Keely Cure institute once. No, I wasn't working my way through. Staying in a room one night to watch a dopey, I was awakened from profound sleep by him standing over me brandishing a razor and a revolver and calling me the man who had run away with his wife. But nothing happened. He forgot me and went to shout out of the window at some woman he insanely took for his wife. I and another man drove an old tin car through the guard into a besieged town once, that being the only available way of getting in. We were taken before the general, who threatened to shoot us. But nothing happened. In an hour we were sipping cognac with the American consul. I was taking a man to military prison once in the Philippines, on a small steamer, and lost my gun. But nothing happened. The prisoner found it and returned it to me. I have been deer hunting and bob-cat hunting in exceedingly wild country. But nothing happened. The other men got the game. I helped to go to the source of the greatest lost gold-mine story that ever tempted the Southwest. Nothing happened. There wasn't any mine.

Now all that isn't any laughable matter, believe me. It means that when I concoct a piece of fiction I've got to slave like a printer's devil to work up a climax!

THE steer branded with the word "Murder" was a "sure enough" steer, so far as I know. A lawyer at Alpine, Texas, out toward El Paso, first told me the story; then I had it vouched for by a number of other men by their adding of details of which the lawyer was not cognizant.

As a matter of fact, nine deaths are said to be connected with the original killing over the calf, which took place before a cowboy branded it. The connection in some instances is hazy. It is thought that no one is still living who was connected with the killings. I talked with one man who claimed to have been in the poker game when a dead man's hand was originated. Other men substantiated this claim.

I took the main and subsequent instances and made fiction pure and simple, but there was one incident which I did not include because to get it in would have required, I thought, a digression of such importance as to lead the reader astray from the story I wanted to get by with. It is this, as I was told:

ONE night a cowboy, connected with the "murder steer" in some manner, rode out of the town of Alpine—many years ago, of course. There was a pouring rain. The cowboy carried before him on his saddle a pet cub bear chained to his wrist. At the edge of town next morning he was found dead, shot, and the bear sat on his breast, whining in the cold.

The next shooting in the series, as I recollect, was the one at the poker game. He who was killed then was supposed to have shot the cowboy.

But here is the dénouement. A few years afterward a Mexican revolutionist was arrested, I think at Fort Stockton. His name was Ochoa, a name well known in, broadly speaking, the El Paso country. He told a story to this effect: He and a companion, journeying from the Mexican border northward, approached Alpine one evening in a downpouring rain. At the edge of town a voice called out in the darkness for them to halt. The voice was that of a drunken man, and Ochoa's companion, thinking that he heard the click-clock of a gun being cocked, fired. There was silence, except for a whimpering like that of a child. Ochoa reproached his comrade, saying that his hastiness seemingly had caused the wounding of a child. Cautiously they struck matches and examined, to find a dead cowboy, his horse nearby, and a cub bear tugging at the wrist of the corpse.

This story made it plain, it seemed, that the man in the poker game had been killed without being a deserving party—in other words, won undying local fame under false pretenses. But some coincidence, wasn't it?

THE Big Bend country, which lies south of the Southern Pacific railroad to the Rio Grande and extends roughly from Sanderson to Sierra Blanca, is full of such yarns. The country has been very little exploited by writers, but a friend of mine has claimed it for his own now. He and I spent a year and a half out there, traveling in a flivver back and forth, covering 30,000 square miles, making 35,000 linear miles, collecting material for a history of the section. The history goes back 400 years, but the fiction possibilities antedate that by a few more centuries.—BARRY SCOBEE.

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AT OUR Camp-Fire I said that Americans who sold inferior war supplies to our Government or who grafted in any way on the materials that meant the efficiency and life of our soldiers and sailors at the front were lower and more contemptible than an ordinary traitor. My vocabulary is not equal to my contempt and hatred for these cowardly vampires who are now enjoying their ill-gotten gains.

It was bad enough to prey on and betray other human beings before we entered the war, but to sell the lives of their own American countrymen for money, bah! such as Judas Iscariot and Benedict Arnold will not let these swine into their part of Hell.

HERE is one of the letters that came in and I know that the good American who wrote it joins with me in the fervent hope that these eunuch traitors, each and every one, great or small, may be damned and accursed to their dying day with the acid knowledge that they sold the lives of their fellows for money, that, three thousand miles behind their backs, they knifed those Americans who were fighting for the safety of the country and institutions which made it possible for these maggots to live in peace and plenty.

I mean *all* of those who in *any* way grafted on *any* kind of war supplies for American fighters—who put through inferior goods, who grafted commissions, who sold at unfair profits, who in *any* way made the country's need a means of personal profit to the country's loss. Some of you who read this are guilty, excusing yourselves on the idiot ground that it was "only a bit of graft" or not even excusing yourselves at all. If you have not yet seen the black shame of what you have done, may you be given to see it, and may the seeing of it keep you in the hell you have made for yourself—for money. May you, and all others like you, never spend a dollar or a dime or a cent of that stolen money without feeling in your heart that it is wet with the blood of men and the tears of women and children. May you never see your hands without knowing that they are red and black—black with your own filthy treachery and as red with the blood of murdered Americans as if your fingers had touched the bleeding wounds you have made. May you never know peace or happiness, justice or good fortune, respect of men or love of women until you have paid your full price and have made what restitution and atonement lie in your power.

Berkeley, Cal.

Your denunciation in the current issue of *Adventure* directed at *eunuch-traitors* strikes a responsive chord in my breast, but why make it so mild!

A HUN is born one; he shakes off the veneer of civilization at the bidding of his Kaiser and the surging up in him of his congenital instinct to trample toward his goals—other people's rights and property. He's the tiger or the rattlesnake described in one of James J. Montague's cleverest verses. The poet therein states that, while he holds no brief for these killers, he is obliged to admit that they merely satisfy the demands of their natures in a forthright sort of way. But the mosquito, on the other hand just eats and eats and eats, until he's wabbly and falls over. He says there's nothing to that brute but venom. Somehow the comparison applies to the American contractor-profiteer-privateer. He knows better, has no passion in the matter—just cold-blooded, low-down, sneaky lust of gain, let the tragedies of his acts strike where they may, far away from his home town and his respectability and local reputation.

THOSE choice spirits that economized in the quality of the explosives, or the fulminating mechanisms of explosive bombs, we sold to Great Britain before we entered the war left those gallant fighters without defense under a rain of very effective ninety-nine per cent.-exploding shells and shrapnel of the Germans during the first vital retreat across Belgium and Northern France. Who shall say what the result was in terms of subsequent casualties to the British and French? Proof of guilty knowledge of the results of that "economy" on the part of those manufacturers ought to be followed by punishments by compraison with which the fate of the paranoiac Kaiser should be as a slap upon the wrist. These eunuch-traitors ought to be roasted as "martyrs" to the suppression of that sort of thing for all future time, for Hell has no pit deep enough and no torture dire enough for them. A man who for lucre to buy automobiles or lobster dinners, or even new churches (for the flattering of his vanity and the getting of a reputation as a humanitarian) condemns his fellow men—and women and children—to the tortures of Hun gas, to rent bodies, to rape and slavery—such men hit the bottom of human turpitude. Below them the imagination finds no space in which to rank fiends of the darkness. Theirs is too dangerous, too fell a strain to be permitted to taint the general heredity of the race. Extinction—and not too painless at that—should be meted out to them in common justice to the race of men. Actually I could weep with pity for an influenza germ I was about to deluge with carbolic acid before I could utter so much as a sigh of regret at gibbeting these vampires.

So please, if you have occasion to revert to them again, put a little pep into your remarks and oblige this constant reader. You thought you did it, perhaps, but by the side of their real deserts your roast really "paled its ineffectual fires." Go at it right. Tell the whole truth of how unspeakably low they are and what they deserve. Try to ape them in

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the matter of mercy, and give them what they give others.—THEO. S. SOLOMONS.

THIS is more than the usual amount of adventure that falls to the lot of a woman, even a woman who has covered a good deal of the earth's surface:

Waterville, Maine.

My father was a sea captain, and with my parents I have traveled all over the world. I have had hair-breadth escapes from drowning, from epidemics of yellow fever and Asiatic cholera, and from small-pox. I was on board when father ran a blockade with a load of refugees, during a war between Chile and Peru. We were fired on, but escaped. I have been to Australia four times, and I have been shipwrecked out in the Solomon Islands, while bound, coal-laden, from New Castle, N. S. W., to Manila, P. I. For two months we lived among the cannibals, on one of the islands, Ugi. I have sketches of the place, drawn by the surgeon of the ship that rescued us, the *H. M. S. Lark*. The work of that same little ship is mentioned in Encyclopædia Britannica.—L. B. R.

A BELATED item—belated not through the writer's fault—on King Fisher, written from the Kingfisher Hotel, Kingfisher, Okla., by a traveling comrade:

Kingfisher, Okla.

King Fisher is buried at Uvalde, Texas, his old home, where he was a deputy sheriff. The house he lived in is there and I was told by a citizen of Uvalde, Texas, that a daughter of King Fisher is now living at Crystal City, Texas.—F. CALDWELL.

P. S. This town, Kingfisher, is the home of the Dalton boys. The name of this town reminded me that I had a little unfinished business with Camp-Fire.—F. C.

AT LAST we have our gun department. In "Ask Adventure" you'll find a new division, "Firearms, Old and New," with D. Wiggins and J. B. Thompson in charge, both of them already known to many of you as authorities on this subject. Address all gun letters to them.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

We live in a time of many and mighty changes. Underneath all the changes runs one powerful, fundamental current—mankind's growing impulse toward a fuller and more real democracy and toward a brotherhood of man that will some day spread throughout the world.

There are many paths to this goal. We see the paths, but we waste time in debating which to follow, we divide and scatter ourselves over them all. For we do *not* clearly see the goal.

We want more democracy, but most of us do not clearly know what democracy is. Our idea of democracy is only general and careless. Almost none of us can reduce it to its bare fundamentals so definitely that we can apply those fundamentals as test and measure of every problem and issue, great or small, that can arise in a nation's life or in an individual's relation to that life. We do not clearly know what democracy is.

It is this ignorance of our goal that most impedes our progress toward it. The logical remedy is to get a clearer understanding, a more definite knowledge, of democracy's real nature and workings. This department is devoted to that purpose.

Democracy is not merely a machine for governing. It is a people's attitude of mind—principles and the daily, widespread, individual practising of those principles. It can not be created by a vote or a revolution; it must be a growth. The only way to stimulate a social growth is education. The particular work of this department is to help spread that education.

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Strange as it may seem, such definite, fundamental education in democracy and its practical application is almost unknown. The need is so obvious and so elementary that it has been overlooked. Americans have been so careless, so selfishly busy or so absorbed in concrete issues that they have failed to examine carefully into the democracy that they boast and have even forgotten there is need of full, solid, thorough understanding.

If you believe in democracy it is your duty to make sure that you yourslf have that thorough understanding and to spread it among others. This department offers you the opportunity to do both.

We can sum up, briefly, the ground already covered and at the same time take some steps in advance:

UNDERNEATH all the present world turmoil lies one general movement, one big motive—mankind's still half blind insistence upon attaining the real democracy it has not yet attained. This resistless force must follow one of two paths: the path of force or the path of lawful democratic methods.

Force is essentially autocratic or inevitably becomes so, and democracy is gone when *any* autocratic minority controls a people, whether the minority is Labor or Capital, a king or a demagog. You can not best advance democracy by violating it.

In this and in most other countries there already exists lawful democratic machinery which, however imperfect, can, *if used*, effect what changes are needed and desired. The people have the lawful power, if only they can be roused to use it.

THE trouble is that both those using or advocating force and those advocating lawful democratic methods forget the great fundamental truth that *democracy is not a form of government, a piece of machinery, but a state of mind, an attitude and practise of a people.* Democracy can not suddenly be created by either a revolution or the lawful passing and enforcement of a thousand laws. Democracy is a *growth*, and it must be a growth in the minds of the individual citizens themselves. The only possible way to get this growth is *education*. And in the present rapid movement of events the only way to educate sufficiently and in time is by a definite, organized, systematic effort.

You can not reach a goal quickly unless you know what the goal is. You can not get democracy quickly unless you know exactly what democracy is. We *don't* know. We have a general idea, but no definite, exact, fundamental standard to apply as test and measure of every concrete issue. Such a standard is possible; for all of us, however we seem to differ, are aiming at the same fundamental thing.

The need is to formulate that standard and then, with it, educate the people, our individual selves, into the growth that is democracy. In no other way can we get democracy that is sound and that will abide.

ONE confusion must be cleared away at the start. Thanks to the war, we have seen autocracy prove itself bad but efficient; have seen democracy prove itself good but inefficient. The obvious solution is a strongly centralized government with power delegated into the hands of a few administrators, thus gaining efficiency, but making it soundly democratic by holding these administrators of *delegated* power inexorably responsible and responsive, always, to the *fundamental* power of the people. Centralization alone means autocracy. Direct control by the whole people means not only inefficiency but chaos, is, indeed, physically impossible; even our approximations of it have proved inefficient.

IT IS easy to centralize. The task is to build up into a living thing the people's fundamental control. Two things are necessary.

First, create the machinery, and the machinery includes—no matter how little we may like some of them in themselves—such things, in one form or another, as the initiative, referendum and recall, direct responsibility of Cabinet officers, government ownership of public utilities, government control of distribution and prices of food, fuel and other vital necessities (which can not be controlled by the people as a whole until put under the control of the people's agent, the government), minority representation and, most emphatically, widespread civil service reform (so that the vast army of public officials under the chief administrators may not be made a tool for these few against the people).

Second, educate the people in the understanding and the living practise of democracy—create in the fullest possible measure the state of mind, the attitude and practise, that alone are democracy itself. Under our present democracy our national and local governments provide for teaching us almost everything in the world—*except democracy.*

Seemingly we are supposed to be born with perfect knowledge of it. Or to absorb it from the air handed down to us from our great-grandfathers—an air that has become hazy from a thousand dust-clouds, befogged by a thousand new issues arising with the world's progress, and that has come to stink with graft and other perversions of selfishness and ignorance.

The first thing a democracy should teach is democracy. And the teaching must be deliberate, organized, systematic.

THIS is not a matter of theory and academics, though sound as such. It is a matter of cold, hard, relentless *necessity*. A man is blind or a fool if he can not see in the world's present turmoil Upheaval, Change, and Reconstruction looming over us like the curling crest of a great wave about to break. The avalanche of a fuller and more real democracy is half-way down the hill. There are but two paths it can follow. If it is not to follow the path of Violence and Chaos, then the other path must be cleared for it. The only way to clear that other path is to build, and as quickly as possible, lawful democratic machinery for the expressing of the fuller democracy's will. And the only way to make that will the real voice of real democracy is by the systematic teaching of what democracy really is and by systematic education into the habit of mind and the living practise that *are* democracy.—A. S. H.

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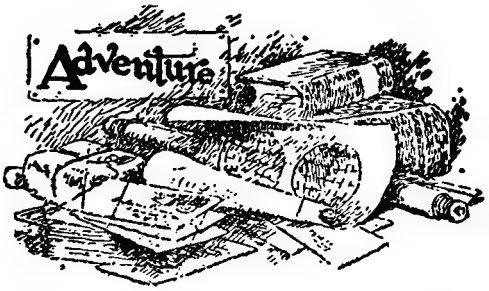

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For 25 cents we will send you, *postpaid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. 25 cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers cannot be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

Back Issues of *Adventure*

WILL SELL: Copies of nearly all issues from October, 1914, to present time. State price.—ATTORNEY WM. A. GOLDEN, 404-408 Diamond Street, Pittsburgh, Penn.

WILL EXCHANGE; February, 1918, to First January, 1919, for books by Jack London or a small rifle or revolver. —WILL HARRISON, Hotel Harrison, Larned and Bates St., Detroit, Mich.

WILL SELL: Complete file to date. Make offer.—C. W. DUCK, 7 N. Liberty St., Elgin, Illinois.

WILL SELL: April, 1911; April, June, Sept., Dec., 1912; Jan. July, Aug., 1913; Nov., Sept., June, March, Jan., 1914; Jan., April, July, Nov., Dec., 1915; all but July, 1916; all 1917 and up to Nov. 1918. Five cents each.—FRED E. WILKINS, Danvers, Mass.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1302 N. St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
B. W. BRINTNALL, 5527 Thirty-third Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brintnall.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, freshwater pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Orlando, Fla. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
CAPT.-ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure*. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially* early history of Missouri valley.

8. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 4249A Juniata St., St. Louis, Mo. Covering Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big timber sections.

9. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

10. Western U. S. Part 2 and Mexico Part 1
J. W. ROBERTSON, 912 W. Lynn Street, Austin, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

11. North American Snow Countries Part 1
(Editor to be appointed.) Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. Ry. Canoes and snow-shoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

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12. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering Southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Clear Lake, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

15. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

16. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, Honolulu, T. H. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

17. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, 84 Court Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

18. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

19. Japan and Korea
(Editor to be appointed.) Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios. (Mr. Ritchie, the former editor of this section, is now in France. His section is accordingly in abeyance until we find a suitable successor.)

20. Russia and Eastern Siberia
CAPTAIN A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Quartermaster, U. S. Troops, Mercedes, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalien; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

21. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Eagle Bird Mine, Washington, Nevada Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

22. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

23. ★ Africa Part 3 Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

24. Africa Part 4 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda, and the Upper Congo.
CHARLES BEADLE, Care Authors' League of America, 33 West 42d St., New York. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

25. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

26. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, 1106 Van Nuys Building, Los Angeles, Cal. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

FIREARMS, OLD AND NEW

Rifles, shot-guns, pistols, revolvers and ammunition. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A. All Firearms of Foreign Make (including comparisons between foreign and American makes.) J. B. THOMPSON, 4249a Juniata St., St. Louis, Mo.

B. All Firearms of American Make. D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

The following "Ask Adventure" editors are now serving in our military forces. We hope you will be patient if their answers are at times delayed: Capt.-Adj. Joseph Mills Hanson; Capt. A. M. Lochwitzky.

Yukon Prospecting

IF YOU care to take a thousand-to-one chance, there is the Yukon country. Some win; many lose. But young men still go North, and prospecting for "dust" is not yet a thing of the past:

Question:—"I am planning to go to the Yukon Country to prospect etc., and expect to push back off the beaten path. Would be pleased if you would give me some information regarding the country.

What month of year is best to go up there?

How far back could I go on a steamer, and what is the fare from Seattle, Washington?

What kind of an outfit would I need to prospect, in the way of tools and clothes? Would it be best to purchase an outfit before leaving this country?

What route would you prefer after leaving the steamer? How are the rivers up there? Can a man navigate them safely in a small boat?

Would be glad if you could give me some information as to how the small prospectors go about their work, and any other information that might prove useful."—R. J. HARTSELL, Newport News, Virginia.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—It is evident that your knowledge of the big North and the prospecting game is limited. For this reason I am not going to answer your questions in order, but just give you what pointers I think would be of value to you.

In your case I would go to Whitehorse or Dawson and get a job either in town or out on some of the dredging outfits. This will give you an acquaintance with the country, the people and the conditions under which they live. You will also have a chance to talk with men who have been in the game and who are working for a grubstake in order to try it again. In this way you might pick up a partner who would be of great value to you. From this point in your adventure, your own judgment would be your guide.

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The Department of Interior, Ottawa, Canada, will send you on application a volume entitled "The Yukon, Its Resources and Possibilities," which will give you a vast amount of information. I would advise you to send for it.

A great many of the rivers can be negotiated with a canoe, but you must get away from easy transportation to find fresh ground.

Your outfit can all be purchased there much better than anywhere else as you will be in better shape to select just what you need instead of taking some one else's say so for it.

Your venture will require a couple of hundred dollars, or even more. This depends on your ability to limit your outfit to actual necessities.

As to the season, almost any time is good, but the Spring is rather the best for the inexperienced man. Of course in the towns there is something doing the year 'round, but a greenhorn naturally does not stand the same show of getting employment as the man who knows just what he wants and where to find it.

If you are going into this thing with the idea of making money, I would say that your chances are about one in a hundred thousand. If the lure of the open is calling you, then it is up to you to take that chance, as you will be well repaid for your trouble by what you will see and the sport you will have. Prospectors get a grub stake and go out in the hills and wander around for months, packing the outfit on their backs. Fish and game are very valuable side lines to the larder, and save packing. Transportation is the great handicap and the greatest hardship, to my notion, in the wilderness. Of course it is not nearly so bad as it was in the early days, but it is bad enough at that.

You will also require to have a certain amount of geological lore at your service, and this can best be picked up right on the ground. If you have an experienced partner, it helps a heap. Otherwise you may spend much valuable time in prospecting hopeless ground.

Take a trip up there anyhow. You will surely enjoy it, if you are human and sane, and remember, there is always a chance.

Cost of Second-Hand Canoes

THE price of the Indian's light craft may vary from country to country and from time to time, but here is at least an indication of the Maine market:

Question:—"What is the cost of a second-hand canoe suitable for hunting and fishing in?

"Can you pitch camp anywhere, or do you need to get a lease?

"What would be the cost of a complete outfit, including traps, guns, canoe, building a shack, and a lease if one is needed, for a season—from August until April?"—EDWIN A. THEWSON, Camp Furlong, Columbus, N. M.

"P.S.—How are the chances for a boy of nineteen, but a man in size, to succeed in the north country?"

Answer, by Dr. Hathorne:—A good second-hand canoe will cost from ten to twenty-five dollars. You ought to be able to get one for about fifteen dollars that would answer your purpose.

You would not require a lease for a spot to pitch a tent, but in order to build a camp it would be necessary to get a permit from the land-owner. I would say it would require an outlay of at least two hundred dollars perhaps more, for an outfit.

A boy of nineteen, if healthy and rugged, ought to succeed in northern Maine if he has a good lot of "grit" and "sticktoitiveness."

Central America as It is

SUCH wide-spread interest has been, and is still, constantly manifested in Central America, that Mr. Young, "Ask Adventure" expert for that part of the world, has drawn up the following general survey of this rich field:

Under the name of Central America are included the republics of Guatemala, Honduras, Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, and the territory known as British Honduras. Panama, formerly, when it was a state of Colombia, belonged to South America.

The areas, population, exports, names of principal cities, etc., may be found in any standard atlas. The purpose of this short monograph is to deal in a general way with the entire group *en masse*.

The interior of all the countries is mountainous, with the exception of British Honduras, which rises gradually from the Atlantic coast to a chain of foothills in the central and western part.

Free gold and auriferous sands are to be found in some part or other of almost every river from the Mexican frontier to the Colombian boundary of Panama. The rivers containing the greatest quantity, however, rise on the eastern slopes and flow into the Atlantic.

Veins of rich gold ore have been discovered in all of the countries, and ledges of rotten gold-bearing quartz are being filed upon frequently. Expert mining attention is at present centered on southern Honduras and northern Nicaragua, in the country drained by the tributaries of the Patuca and Segovia Rivers. It is quite likely in a short time that another Eldorado will be located somewhere in this region.

Parts of Panama are rich in deposits of free gold and many ledges have been located. Some of the ground would pay fortunes in placer mining were it not for the fact that usually the gold is imbedded in a stiff clay which defies the action of water. Men have made wages with a sluice-box a short distance from the Canal Zone, up the Gatuncillo River.

Silver is mined and exported from almost all of the countries and no doubt exists in all of them.

A plantation managed on a business basis will pay in almost any part of Central America. The coffee of Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica is among the best produced in the world. The low-lying lands along both coasts produce bananas, rubber, coconuts, sugar cane, etc. Corn and other grains are raised in small quantities in the high valleys.

Trading along either coast may be carried on with the natives. Ordinary blue overalls, cheap cotton shirts, *machetes* (most of which, strange to say, are manufactured in the U. S. A.), cheap hunting-knives, Ingersolls, gold-plated jewelry, axes, etc., are good trade goods. These may be given in

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exchange at high prices for rubber, ivory nuts (*tagua*), coconuts, gold, and other things too numerous to mention.

The prevailing language is Spanish. Along the Atlantic coast of Panama and Costa Rica, English is spoken by the West Indian negroes who have settled there and who work on the plantations of the fruit companies.

There are few Indians to be found in Central America who are unable to speak enough Spanish to make themselves understood. In retired places, however, they are often unfriendly to newcomers, but seldom actually hostile.

It has often been said that the bulk of mahogany, and other furniture woods has been exhausted. Yet quantities of logs are being exported constantly.

Fortunes are yet to be made in various lines. Barks of trees containing drugs, gums, saps, etc., etc., are suggestions. New fiber-producing plants no doubt exist.

Many lines of steamers ply between parts of Central America and the United States. Their sailing dates may be found in the Official Railroad Guide found in every ticket office and in almost every hotel.

Modes of travel vary from trains to walking trails on foot. Good auto roads exist in several of the countries and are being constructed in others. There are not a great many railroads and most of these cross the countries from east to west or from the coast up into the interior.

Mules are sure-footed for the high mountain trails and may be hired or purchased cheap. In the lowlands better time is to be made on foot. Many swamp trails exist upon which it is impossible to travel by any other method.

Light khaki clothing is best. High boots or canvas leggings are necessary as a protection against insects and snakes. A mosquito-bar, or better yet a thin cheese-cloth, is essential in the low country as a protection against mosquitoes and disease-carrying gnats.

A man can live, native fashion, off the country in all places away from civilization, but it is well to carry a quantity of beans, rice, tinned meats, etc., for a few meals when gun, rod, and knife fail to provide. A native guide can point out many edible plants and nuts. A pet monkey will eat nothing that will poison a man.

Calomel, quinin, salts and a few other common medicines will often save a life. Wide-mouthed bottles, corked and sealed with wax, are useful for protecting matches, medicine, etc., from the rain. Pieces of a discarded auto inner tube are better when tied tightly at each end with a strong cord.

The best way to keep correctly posted on Central America is to subscribe to "The Bulletin of the Pan-American Union," published in Washington, D. C., by this society. It costs $2 a year for the English language edition and $1.50 for the Spanish.

Would You Follow the Sea

OUR country bids fair soon to be the leading maritime nation of the world. Which means that hundreds of thousands of young men will turn profitably from the pursuits of land to the business of carrying goods from the U. S. A. to the far corners of the earth:

Question:—"I am nearly eighteen years old, with a high school education. I love the sea and expect to spend my career in things maritime. Could you give me information about some good schools where a fellow could get a thorough course in marine engineering and construction? Do you think the above professions are good ones? Tell me what experience and study would be necessary to get a ships' officer's license.

"I think that one should have a good foundation before starting at a thing if possible."—RICHARD SCRUGGS, Perry, Florida.

Answer, by Captain Dingle:—If you have a real desire to follow the sea, there is no reason why you should not eventually become an officer in deck or engineroom forces. For a young man of average physique, who has no serious defects of vision or hearing, there are several methods of attaining his object; but before qualifying to take an examination for officers' ratings actual experience is necessary, as follows:

For the engineer's license, three years as fireman on sea-going vessels; or two years as oiler or watertender; or six months as assistant engineer on bay or lake steamers; or one year as chief engineer of river steamers; or one year as locomotive or stationary engineer, with six months' sea service in some engineroom capacity; or graduation from engineering class of nautical school ship; or one year in charge of stationary plant of 1,000 H. P. or more; or three years as apprentice to machinist's trade, with six months sea service.

For the deck officer's license, two years' service on sea-going steamer; or three years' deck service in sailing ship; or three years on fishing vessel; or graduation from seamanship class of school ship.

These requirements may be met in any manner most agreeable to the applicant; but the best way these days is by entering the United States Shipping Board employ, which arranges for free training with pay and outfit, and the privilege, after securing the necessary experience, of entering the free navigation and engineering schools to prepare for the actual examinations.

For a minor it is necessary to have parent's or guardian's permission, and in all cases American citizenship, naturalized or born, is essential.

Your nearest station, whence you may obtain all information regarding this service, is, Mr. Hardy Croom, 130 Riverside Avenue, Jacksonville, Florida; or the chief office is, U. S. Shipping Board, Custom House, Boston, Mass.

There are also the State school ships, which offer many advantages. A letter to the Navy Department, Washington, will bring you information as to the nearest ship to you, with data regarding vacancies or possible ones in future should none be open at present.

Oregon Offers Opportunities

THE States of our West coast, with their hundreds of thousands of acres waiting to be reclaimed, cleared, and cultivated, always need men. Their industries, too, are rapidly growing:

Question:—"I would like information on Oregon. What is the climate? What are the living conditions? Where are the shipyards located, and what

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is their average rate of pay? Are there many industries except farming? What are the chances of a fellow obtaining work?

"I am a painter, and have had experience on saws in a planing mill; also a carpenter, and have a good idea about farming."—H. S. C., Plymouth, Pa.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—Oregon has a wet climate in the part west of the Cascade Mountains. That is, it rains much more than it does in most of the territory on this coast, but it is nothing like the tropical dampness. That part is a wonderful section for fruit raising and agricultural products in general. The eastern part is drier, some sections ranking as sage-brush desert, land that is a wonderful producer when one gets water on it. As to living conditions, they are just about the average of Coast conditions, which are considerably easier than Eastern.

Oregon shipyards are principally at Portland and Astoria. What the average pay is in them would take some time to figure out, since the industry employs so many classes of work. It is good, however. The riveter gets about $6 a day on this coast. Ship carpenters got all the way from $3.50 to $6. Write to the Columbia Shipbuilding Co., Portland, for further information on that score.

I do not know what they pay painters on ship work now, but all the trades are getting high wages.

Oregon is not a manufacturing State. It is a farming, fruit-raising section, but it also has large lumbering interests, and some industries of the manufacturing sort. Seattle and Bellingham, Washington, have rather more. Both States are excellent territory, and men are in big demand for all kinds of industry.

Britain's Peerless Board-of-Trade Papers

IF YOU want to apprentice yourself to the British Merchant Marine and have to pay for the privilege, you get something for your money, as this correspondence shows:

Question:—"I would like to get information in regard to the apprenticing of young men in the British merchant service. I understand that by paying a certain amount and serving a given time a man can qualify for mate's papers. Am I right?"

Answer, by Mr. Brintnall:—Whether a man pays for his apprenticeship in the British merchant service or not depends on how well off he is. There are cases where young men whose parents have no financial backing are taken into the service for nothing, but as a general thing some payment is made.

After serving a certain time a man qualifies for his papers by taking examinations. A man with first-class papers in the British Board of Trade can go anywhere in the world on them as they are rated higher than papers of the same class in the merchant service of any other country, not excepting the United States.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

WALLINGER, E. A. Home in Harriman, Tenn. Last time I heard from you was in Muscle Shoals, Ala. Write me. Important.—Address J. R. TILLER, East Norfolk, Mass.

KOHN, PVT. WM., 4th Co. C. A. C. Ft. Sherman, Canal Zone, Panama, was his address when last heard from. Please write to—1ST SGT. SAM F. GRIFFEL, Co. A. 110th Inf., A. E. F. A. P. O. 744.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

ELLIOT, ROBERT. Last heard of was clerk in a hotel in South Bend, Ind., about four years ago. Any information gladly received by mother.—MRS. WM. FOSTER, 1110 Dovercourt Rd., Toronto, Ont., Canada.

HENDRICKS, E. SYLVESTER. Last heard from in Plattsburg, N. Y., 1915. Formerly of Co. A. 1st U. S. Inf. in Hawaii, 1912 to 1915. Or any others of that outfit from 1913 to 1916. Please write to—D. E. HOLLOWELL, 417 Nat. Ave., Brazil, Ind.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

LEDINGHAM[1] OR WARD, JOHN. (Brother)—Last heard from in Chehalis, Washington, in 1915. Any information will be thankfully received by—W. A. LEDINGHAM, Box 9, Kenora, Ont., Canada.

VAN DORN, EARL. Last seen in Austin, Nevada, July 3, 1918. Age 30. Height 5 feet 10 inches. Dark hair, sandy mustache, ruddy complexion. Weighs about 160 pounds. Any information will be appreciated by—GEO. L. DEAN, 3530 East 12th St., Oakland, Calif.

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DECKER, EDWARD L. Last heard from at Marine Barracks, at Philadelphia in 1905. Please write.—Address Lost Trails 371, care of *Adventure*.

KLINE, SERG'T ONIE F. (Husband) 67th Company, 5th regiment, U. S. Marines, serving somewhere in France. Reported killed in action July 18, 1918. Can get no information concerning same. Any information will be greatly appreciated by his wife.—MRS. O. F. KLINE, 612 So. Cushman, Tacoma, Wash.

LUCAS, MRS. JOE. In your own interest send your exact address to *Adventure*.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

MICHAEL, JAMES. Left home April 13, 1916. Five feet 6 inches tall, dark hair, gray eyes, and dark complexion. Thirty years of age. Known as "Irish." Paper maker by trade. Any information will be greatly appreciated by his mother.—MRS. JAMES GORDON, 216 Weeb St., St. Marys, Ohio.

WALTERS, W. E. Ran a pool hall in Livingston, Mont., in 1913, 1914. He sold out. His wife and two children went to Chicago. I am a personal friend and would like to know his whereabouts. Any information will be greatly appreciated by—H. M. OBERMANN, Mt. Union, Henry County, Iowa.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

McGOVERN, JOHN. Left Schaghticoke, New York, April 10, 1876. Was in Elpaso, Delnorth, Mexico, 1882. Born in Aughely near Stramatt, County Cavan, Ireland. Any information will be thankfully received by his brother.—HUGH MCGOVERN, Schaghticoke, New York.

LUCAS, JOE. Your present address unknown. Please send address to party to whom you wrote about January 1st. He will forward by return mail letter containing all desired "facts." Don't worry. Your wife.—L. L.

HANNOLD, HENRY F. Last heard from in Tulsa, Okla., in 1914 or 1915. Age 42. Follows oil business. He is a married man with two children. Mother is dead and I have other news which he should know. Any information will be appreciated by his sister.—MRS. ELMIRA HANNOLD HOWLETT CHAPMAN, 150 East 8th St., Erie, Pa.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the Mid-March or First-April issues of Adventure. They can get name of inquirer from this magazine:

AYLES, LEON W. and Tessie; Bareda, St. Revato; Bastla, Clifford S.; Beasley, Tom H. (Red); Brown, Grace Florence; Clancy, R. L.; Clayton, George; Clifton, Mrs. Harry; Devine, Dan; Dewal, Jack E. Jr.; Dietz, Mrs. Will; Dorians, Mildred; Fribert, Fread.; Harris, Fred; Haydon, Dewey; Houdyshelt, Jasper E.; Johnstone, Andres Rintoul; Kirk, Howard; Luntze, Alfred; Lyon, Henry; MacCracken, John Alcorn; McCormack, L.; Milline, or McGregor, Scotty; Miller, Goldenberg, Burke, Arbogast, Kane; Nichols, Frank Butler; Paffmann, George; Rahal, Joe; Reilly, O'Leary, Savage, T. C. Collins Morsea, Relatives: Robinson, William; Shatswell, Richard C.; Sjogren, Gus; Stone, George Laurie; Thomas, Arthur R.; Wentzel, G. T.; Westfall, Clarence V.; Whelan, Maurice; Wilson, Christopher, Terry.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH, Ruth Gilfillan, Lee Hays; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; O. B. Franklin; Cole Williams.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you.—Address J. E. COX, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

FIRST MAY ADVENTURE

Eight yarns of Adventure on sea and land, in addition to the four in the ad. on page 2, come to you with the First May number, out April 18th.

HIGHLY CIVILIZED — ***By E. S. Pladwell***
Across the Arizona desert roars the great express, bearing its passengers to an unexpected thrill.

HONEST MEN — ***By Jack Bechdolt***
Another story of that sagacious old skipper, *Captain "Fog-Horn" Hood*.

THE FINGERS OF HOME — ***By Clyde B. Hough***
In the mountains of the Philippines two lonely men make the old, old search for fortune.

CALICO REMINISCES — ***By J. C. Evans***
Life and death in a mining-camp. *"Calico" Evans* has seen much of both—and he knows how to tell about it.

WITCH-DOCTORS. A four-part story. Part IV. — ***By Charles Beadle***
In the jungle of the Dark Continent *Birnier* sees his days as a god come to a close.

THE CHUCKAWALLA KID — ***By Everett Saunders***
As the *"Kid"* throws down his cards and rakes in the pot, *Paul Burke* makes a grave accusation.

DIRTY WORK FOR DOUGHGOD — ***By W. C. Tuttle***
Female school-teachers for Paradise? *"Doughgod" Smith* says yes.

THE GOOD LOSER WINS — ***By Gordon Young***
Which tells how *Alexina Grimshaw* sets out with a crooked faro outfit to find a man.

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A Giant Tube - 50¢

WE have found a way to give the million men who tame their beards with Mennen's a little more Shaving Cream for their money. We are now making, in addition to the 35 cent size, a he-size, portly tube with enough Cream in it to last six months.

The economy of it works out this way. One big empty tube of pure tin costs less than two small tubes. (If pure tin goes any higher they'll be making jewelry of it.) A big tube can be filled, packed, labelled and sold for almost the same labor cost as a small tube—or for much less than the cost of two small tubes.

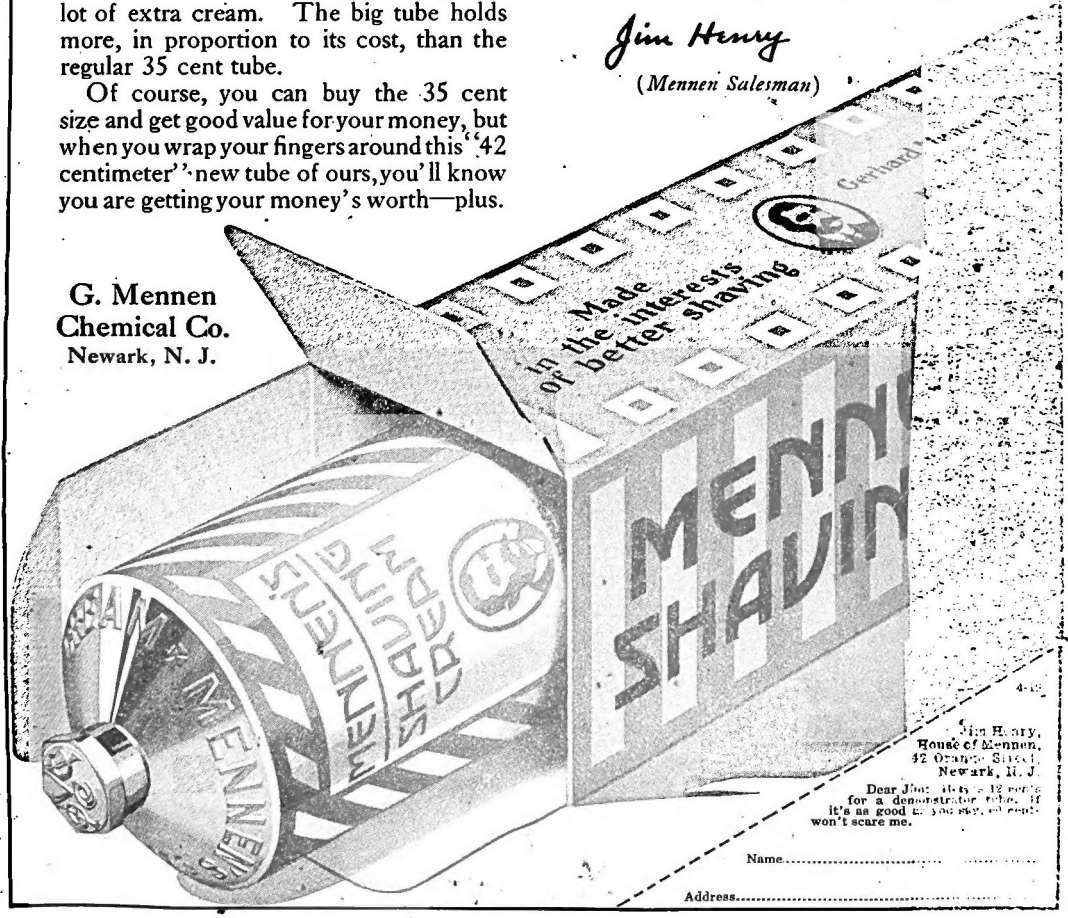
These several savings pay for quite a lot of extra cream. The big tube holds more, in proportion to its cost, than the regular 35 cent tube.

Of course, you can buy the 35 cent size and get good value for your money, but when you wrap your fingers around this "42 centimeter" new tube of ours, you'll know you are getting your money's worth—plus.

Send for one of our 12c demonstrator tubes. Squeeze a half-inch into your wet brush. Agitate it on the point of your chin until a lather forms and then spread. Add gradually about three times as much water, hot or cold, as you usually use, work the lather with the brush for three full minutes—don't rub with the fingers. Then go through the form of shaving. It won't seem like shaving. Your razor will glide over your countenance the way it did the first time you removed a boyish down from your upper lip. Afterwards your face will feel great. About three such tests will convince you that 50 cents is a cheap price for six months of perfect shaves.

Jim Henry

(*Mennen Salesman*)



G. Mennen Chemical Co.
Newark, N. J.

Jim Henry,
House of Mennen,
42 Orange Street,
Newark, N. J.

Dear Jim: Here's 12 cents for a demonstrator tube. If it's as good as you say, of course it won't scare me.

Name.....

Address.....

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Bayer-Tablets and Capsules of Aspirin contain *genuine* Aspirin.

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Bayer Capsules of Aspirin are sold in *sealed* packages

TABLETS	CAPSULES
Tin pocket boxes of 12	Sealed packages of 12
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The trade-mark "Aspirin" (Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.) is a guarantee that the monoaceticacidester of salicylicacid in these tablets and capsules is of the reliable Bayer manufacture.

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